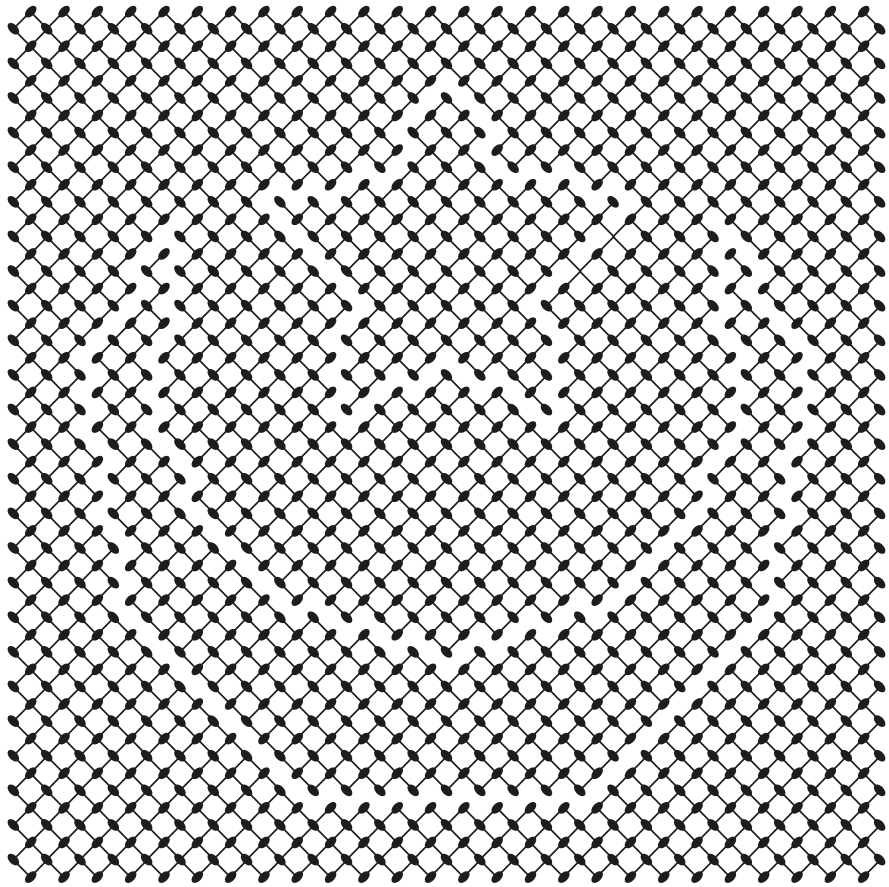
FROM JERUSALEM TO ARMAGEDDON



A selection of Danarto's *short stories*

on and around Palestine

1968 – *2009*

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From Jerusalem to Armageddon: A Selection of Danarto's *short stories on and* around *Palestine (1968–2009)*

Danarto Dkk, Danarto Dkk, Harry Aveling, Rani Elsanti Ambyo

Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia, Volume 8, Number 2 & Volume 9, Number 1, March 2025, pp. iii-117 (Article)

Published by NUS Press Pte Ltd
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56159/sen.2025.a960544

For additional information about this article
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/960544

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A selection of Danarto's short stories on and around Palestine (1968-2009)

From Jerusalem to Armageddon

Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2023), ISBN: 978-623-88448-6-9.
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Production & coordination
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Print and online edition published by
SOUTHEAST OF NOW: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia
March 2025

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Acknowledgements

- Açik Radyo
- Adil Alba
- Agus Dermawan T.
- Ahmad Bahtiar, M.Hum.
- Aiko Kurahara
- Alexandra de Araujo Tilman
- Ali Uluç Kutal
- Amadea Putri Zafira
- Amar Kanwar
- Ammar Muhammad Hilmy Zaydan
- Andy Satria
- Anna Cholilah
- Anto
- Antonio Riordan
- Ariela Kristantina
- Asep
- Aslı Esra Kocamaz
- Aslı Tüter
- Atakan Yavuz
- Athif Thitah Amithuhu
- Avianti Armand
- Azlima Ayu Sabrina
- Bambang "Toko" Witjaksono
- Bambang Bujono
- Barın Han Studio
- Ben Sohib
- Bengisu Çağlayan
- Bernando J. Sudjibto
- Berto Tukan
- Bige Örer
- Bihter Çetinyol
- Bitti Gitti
- Buldanul Khuri
- Butet Kartaredjasa
- Buzdokuz Poetry Magazine
- Çiğdem Buğdaycı
- Çisel Karacebe
- Dadang Sudrajat
- SAM Funds for Arts and Ecology
- Danu Harmoko (Mocco)
- Danu Setio Aji
- Darmawati
- David Teh
- Dean Azka
- Dedi Munandar
- Defne Ada Yapıcıer
- Dewi Novitasari
- Diah Handayani
- Diar Candra
- Sragen Regency Office for Archive and Library
- Directorate General of Culture, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Republic of Indonesia
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- Duto Hardono
- Dyas Cahaya Mariyansyah
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- Edy Suryanta, S.E., M.M.
- Ega Budaya Putra
- Elif Kamışlı
- Emir Barın
- Erdem İlgi Akter
- Jendela (Visual art space), Esplanade
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- Galih Prasetyo
- Gamze Öztürk
- Gayuh Chitta
- Gema Swaratyagita
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- Hikmat Darmawan
- Hilmar Farid
- 17th Istanbul Biennial
- I Made Susanta Dwitanaya
- Ilham Muhammad
- Immartyas Ghinaa Renata
- IndoArtNow
- Irfan R. Darajat
- Isdaryanto
- Jajang C. Noer
- Jakarta International Literary Festival 2022
- Januar Lazuardi
- Jaronah Abdullah
- Jasso Winarto
- Jendela Institute
- Johanda Karihadi
- Joned Suryatmoko
- Jumaldi Alfi
- Kandida Rani Nyaribunyi
- Kang Tjo Goan (Oscar aka Okay)
- Kartika Solapung
- Kedung Darma Romansha
- Kelompok Seni Rupa Jendela
- Danarto's extended family
- Kerem Güneş
- Köken Ergun
- Literature committee, Jakarta Arts Council 2020-2023
- Komunitas KAHE
- Komunitas Spirit Turki
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- Kosarupa
- KUNCI Study Forum & Collective

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- Nur Siwon
- Nuraini Juliastuti
- Obrolan Eksperimental
- Özgür Atlagan
- Paul Kadarisman
- 2023 National Culture Week (PKN)
- Publishing Altermed
- Penerbit Gang Kabel
- Pitra Hutomo
- Pius Sigit Kuncoro
- Indonesian Student Association in Istanbul (PPI Istanbul)
- Pratchaya Phinthong
- Indonesian language and literature education program, Department of Education and Tarbiyah, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) of Jakarta
- H.B. Jassin Literary Documentation Centre (PDS H.B. Jassin)
- Pustaka Selasar
- Radio Alhara
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- Yuta Nakamura
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- Zeynep Ünal
- Zeyno Pekünlü
- Zulaiman Vidris

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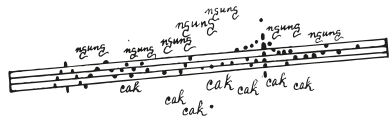
30 

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PROVENANCE

The Indonesian version, "Masjidil Aqsha, Yahudi, dan Umar bin Khathab", is published in:
- *Orang Jawa naik haji dan umroh* [Javanese on Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage] (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1999);
- *Orang Jawa naik haji dan umroh* [Javanese on Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage] (Yogyakarta: Diva Press, 2016); and
- *Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon* [From Jerusalem to Armageddon], ed. Danarto dkk. (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2024).

The English version featured in this publication is translated by Danarto dkk. (Rachel K. Surijata).

EDITORS' NOTES

Danarto's Hajj travelogue is one of his best-selling nonfiction publications. Its first publisher, Grafitipers (Jakarta), printed *Orang Jawa naik haji* [Javanese on Hajj pilgrimage] at least four times (1984, 1987, 1991 and 1993). Essays in that first collection were initially published as a series in *Zaman* weekly magazine (from October 1983 to January 1984). Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) in his review ("Menyingkap rahasia orang Jawa" [Uncovering the secrets of Javanese men], *Tempo*, 22 September 1984) pronounced this travelogue a comical, necessary and exciting take on the Hajj. Gus Dur further notes that despite its Javanese references, the travelogue is still grounded on a sincere expression to perform the Hajj pilgrimage.

Danarto did the Umrah pilgrimage twice in two consecutive years and consciously distinguished between the two trips, down to its fundamentals. First, he labelled his New Year's Umrah trip in December 1994 as a "pilgrimage by invitation". Indeed he was invited by Intan Tour, a Hajj and Umrah trip travel bureau with close ties to the *Hidayatullah* magazine and Pondok Pesantren. For Danarto, this trip was a "pilgrimage internship" because he did not pay out of his own pocket for it. He felt the need to acknowledge these facts so as not to develop feelings of arrogance (or be cocky), which impedes spiritual development.

He labelled his second Umrah trip in October 1995 as a "self-funded pilgrimage", a trip deeply guided by a sincere desire to perform a pilgrimage ritual, as it required faith, piety, discipline, and domestic management. Danarto extended his trip to the Holy Land with a visit to Palestine, Jordan and Egypt. The travelogue of this journey suggests that it was not mere coincidence that he was willing to pay out of his own pocket to visit sites and monuments of the Palestinian struggle that had been prominent in his works for years (also for years after). This Umrah travelogue was then published by Dian Rakyat as an annex, *Orang Jawa naik haji dan umroh* [Javanese on Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage] in 1999. In addition to the Umrah logs, this book also features comic panels and image annotations hand-drawn by Danarto in between the text.

Despite short stories being commonly categorised as fiction, it is rather impractical to draw lines between fiction and nonfiction when reading Danarto's works. As we will see in this publication, Danarto presented actual characters and used factual data to indicate time and events in his short stories. He once listed prices of groceries, from household items to vegetables and fruits, and published it in the short story column of a newspaper ("Akulah pasar" [I am a market], publication not yet known, 1975). A clipping of this short story was found in the collection of H.B. Jassin literary documentation centre (PDS H.B. Jassin), Jakarta.

The following log from Danarto's Umrah trip and visit to Palestine is offered in this publication as a prelude to read his short stories afresh, to retrace the leitmotifs in his score as he voiced the struggle of the Palestinian people.

THE AQSA MOSQUE, JEWISH, AND UMAR IBN AL-KHATAB

Most memorable of all was the visit to Palestine. That land of constant unrest remains swarmed by tourists. Rows of big buses park on the roadside of the busiest street in Jerusalem. Despite its hilly landscape. Young Palestinians, boys and girls, strolling along, goofing around, in front of modest-looking shops. O Palestine, what a wondrous beauty. When the night comes, your face shines like a delightful view from the mountaintop, from Bogor looking down towards Jakarta, with thousands of its twinkling lights shaping into valleys of rays, exuding serenity. But, no, not you. No. You keep fighting a war. Battles between Palestinian people going against Israeli occupiers continue to rage, even though issues surrounding religion have been resolved here. Soon, Inshallah (God willing), the Republic of Palestine will stand side by side with the state of Israel.

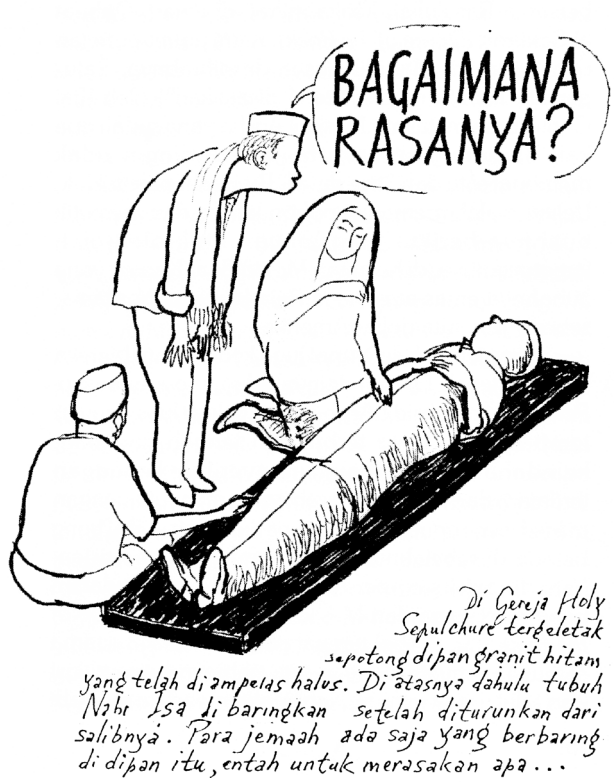
At the border terminal between Jordan and the West Bank, it took ages to sort out our entry permits for Palestine. Indeed, there was a queue. The place was chock-full of tourists from all over the world. It took about four to five hours to get our permits sorted before our bus was finally on its way, that is, after fighting for seats. Reasonably so, as there were limited buses. Miftah had to get into a loud fight with a foreign tourist to defend a seat that was rightfully his. Meanwhile, our leader, Kiai Umar, had to travel separately—he gave up his seat and waited for the next bus to arrive. Kiai Umar's patience is truly unmatched.

Going past the desert where emergency barracks of the Israeli military stood, where tents of the poor Palestinian fighters were set, past banana plantations, barren wastelands and barbed wire fences, we finally arrived on the West Bank of the Jordan River, just as it is often written about and shown in TV news programmes. At the entrance terminal for the area governed by Israel, we were inspected thoroughly. Yet another long wait. Bags were searched. The young Israeli officers looked relaxed, cheerful and agile. Some Caucasian tourists took photos with them. The imperious control of those Israeli soldiers over Palestine was only possible through fraudulent tellings of a long history. Leon Uris, through his novel, *Exodus*, even confidently chronicled that it is through the kindness of Palestinians who lent their land and took on Jewish guests, that they became neighbours.

Just in time for Asr prayer, we entered Jericho, a city at the lowest point of the earth from sea level. A young Palestinian boy is seen on the side of a busy road with his long-barrelled rifle. We had lunch at the expensive Temptation Restaurant, where they served various kinds of food. Rows of tour buses were parked in the restaurant's courtyard. A cup of tea was priced at 2 US dollars. They provided water together with the food to help wash it down our throats. Truth be told, this restaurant is rather alright. That is, in comparison to the restaurant in Victoria Hotel, where we stayed in Palestine, which was rather cruel for not serving any drinks with their food, not even water. Perhaps they wanted us to order drinks separately. Ridiculous, what a silly hotel. I shall change its name to The Victorbuffoon Hotel. As an act of protest, I filled my drinking glass with rice.

Day had turned into night when we entered the Bethlehem Church in Jerusalem. The name Jerusalem always reminds us of the knightliness of one Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph. A priest ushered us inside into a cramped room. We caressed the birthplace of Prophet Isa (Jesus Christ), which is marked on the floor with a 12-pointed star (?). Next to it was the manger where Jesus Christ was laid right after sliding out of his mother's womb. Jesus Christ is a highly honoured apostle in the Qur'an. So is his mother, Maryam the Blessed, who was mentioned in the Qur'an as the most noble woman in the universe.

It is as I caress the birthplace of Jesus Christ that I am reminded of my Christian friends: Sentot and Maruti, Nano and Ratna, Emmanuel and Ati, Eka and Melani, Kris, Efix, Larto, Bre, Dakidae, Ignas, Parakitri, Mul W, Topo, Father Mangun, Darmanto, Prihatmi, Ayu, Bakdi, Linus, Korrie, Frans the Forest Sufi. Later when I become a billionaire, I will treat these friends to a trip here.


BAGAIMANA RASANYA?
Di Gereja Holy Sepulchure terbeletak sepotong dipan granit hitam yang telah di ampelas halus. Di atasnya dahulu tubuh Nabi Isa di baringkan setelah diturunkan dari salibnya. Para jemaah ada saja yang berbaring di dipan itu, entah untuk merasakan apa...

Trailing Via Dolorosa, the footpath where Jesus once carried his cross—now a replica of the alleyways of Kauman lined with walled houses—we head towards Golgotha, a place believed to be where Jesus Christ was crucified. I had imagined it to be a large stretch of field, as portrayed in many paintings, yet it turned out to be a small section of land called Golgotha and a marble bed where the body of Jesus Christ was laid, which is now located inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Here, I caress another bed, this time a marble stone, where Christ was laid (it seems that this one had been refurbished) as I remember my friends again.

We did the Fajr prayer at the Aqsa Mosque. Inside Qubbat as-Sakhra (Dome of the Rock), we saw the noble rock that wanted to follow the Prophet during Mi'raj. We took photos with the imam of the Aqsa Mosque in his *mihrab*. Each of us, one by one, was also given a blessing ("sanctified") by Kyai Cholil Ibrahim, the caretaker (*takmir*) of the Aqsa Mosque, who had twice been invited to Jakarta. The chilly air did not subdue the spirit of Ms Hashimah's "three maidens". She herself even climbed a date tree to pick its fruits along with the stalk for her nephew at home, as a souvenir from the courtyard of the Noble Rock Mosque, whose golden dome was made at the expense of King Hussein of Jordan, amounting to 2 million US dollars.

The local pilgrims were also cold. Bundled up in their thick jackets. Ah, if only there was a *bakso* vendor. The large courtyard of the Aqsa Mosque, with its open-air ablution placed right at the centre, is an archaic beauty that touches the deepest nostalgia of historical records until it became one with that female mosque—the Dome of the Rock—beside it. We, the Muslim-Christian-Jewish pilgrims, line up in a queue one by one, to enter the Dome of the Rock, a symbol for the seedbed where three Abrahamic religions were sown together, the three places where its three prophets—Prophet Muhammad, Prophet Jesus and Prophet Solomon—meditated and prayed. I prayed two *rak'ahs* at the place where Prophet Muhammad prayed. I also touched my prayer mat upon the footprints of His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad and caressed the place where he took a step before flying to the sky towards Sidrat al-Muntaha on his Mi'raj journey.

I am reminded of Taufik Rahzen, who camped out in Baghdad before the US and Allied forces invaded Iraq in 1991, and found a loose pebble from the Dome of the Rock Mosque and brought it to the homeland (Indonesia) as a beautiful souvenir.

Di Masjid Hebron, Palestina, para jemaah suka mengintip lewat lubang yang ada di lantainya. Ada ruang sedalam 15 meter di bawah lantai yang ditera ngi jilin yang dikirim dari atas, merupakan makam para nabi dan istrinya.

After going through two heavily guarded lines, we entered the Hebron Mosque, Prophet Abraham's Mosque, which was shared with the Jewish pilgrims. The space for pilgrimage became more limited. At first, I touched my prayer mat upon and caressed the footprints of Prophet Muhammad, who is said to have come here by invitation of Prophet Abraham before Mi'raj. After which I prayed two *rak'ahs* in between the tomb of Prophet Ishaq and the tomb of his wife, Rebekah. As it turned out, the tombs of those prophets, Prophet Abraham, Sarah, Yaqub, Yusuf, Ishaq and Rebekah, were 15 metres below the floor of the mosque. We peered inside through a small hole on the floor: a few candles were lit down there. Candles sent from above.

To acknowledge Jerusalem is to acknowledge Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph.

He who was prophesied in the Bible as the ruler of Jerusalem. And as such it occurred. Umar ruled Jerusalem and gave the largest part of the area to the Muslims. Umar cleansed the Suleiman Mosque once again after it had been used as a dumping ground for the Christians, as they mocked the Jews. The Aqsa Mosque (which still stands today) was built in the makeshift place where Umar did his prayers, next to Qubbat al-Sakhrah, by Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik in the seventh to eighth centuries AD.

For the noble rock, a giant dome was built on top of it by Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan and it became known as Qubbat al-Sakhrah.

It was Sayyidina Umar who decided that the Jewish shall live and reside again in Jerusalem, together with Muslims and Christians. As is known, since the time of Emperor Titus and Christian Roman rulers, the Jewish were forbidden to live in Palestine. On the contrary, Umar believed that Jerusalem was the holy place of the three religions. Thus the Jewish people, who had been stranded in the deserts for hundreds of years, came in flocks with gratitude towards the tender-heartedness of the 'Father of the Jewish People', Umar ibn al-Khattab, to reside back in Palestine. Yet apparently history has been turned upside down by the Jewish people. Today, the Israeli government ceaselessly oppresses Palestinians, the people who own the largest part of that Palestinian land.

2023?!MASHAALLAH

by Danarto dkk. (Hairus Salim HS, Grace Samboh,
Ruhaeni Intan, Andri Setiawan)
translated by Rani Elsanti

> *There is a village in Palestine, called Armageddon. It is in this village that all world powers gather to organise World War III.*

Using the character of "we", Danarto (1940–2018) penned the above sentence in his short story *O, Jerusalem* (2007). This story is not a story in the general sense, with characters, an underlying theme, dialogues and a plot; rather, it is more like a dispatch, or perhaps a record of impressions the character gained when they stopped by Jerusalem after their pilgrimage to Mecca. The character observed and recorded the situation in Jerusalem and its residents, who have always been engulfed in a blanket of tensions and vigilance in the midst of conflicts and wars. This includes the intense scrutiny and surveillance by security officers of the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem. The word "Armageddon" in the sentence found in the aforementioned fragment of the story immediately reminds readers of another short story by Danarto, *Armageddon*, which he wrote in 1968—almost 40 years prior. That story is intense, deep and mysterious, narrating the conflict between a mother and her daughter fighting over the love of "Dolly" and witnessed by "Bekakrak-an", another character in the story who is no less curious. Apart from the intense dialogue between the characters in the story, the depiction of the location and atmosphere is so vivid—the desolate and rocky plain, gloomy and sombre—while the characters' states of mind are restless, disappointed and dejected.

When they first come across this story, many readers might wonder what "Armageddon" in the title means. Throughout the story itself, there is no mention of Armageddon. What could it refer to? "...a village in Palestine, ... [where] all world powers gather to organise World War III", as he would later write in the short story *O, Jerusalem* (2007)? Can this explain the short story *Armageddon* (1968)? Maybe, maybe not.

No, because it is clear that the two short stories are not at all related, be it in terms of theme, characters and plot. There are many differences between the two. But it could also be possible, as both stories talk about conflicts and wars. "Armageddon" is clearly not a term originating from the Indonesian archipelago. It does not appear in any Indonesian dictionary. The word originates from Greek and Hebrew. In the New Testament, Armageddon is an "arena where the war culminates between good and evil, which heralds the end of the world".[1] Armageddon is also generally understood as "a great, deadly conflict that takes place on a large scale, and is catastrophic and destructive in nature". Danarto borrows the terminology known in Jewish theology to describe a situation of conflict and war. The infamous Baratayudha war involving the Pandawa and Kurawa clans, the Trojan War between the Greeks and the Trojans, the Puputan War between the Balinese and the Dutch colonial army, the conflict between a mother and her daughter, acts of terrorism—each of these can be called an Armageddon. The list of Armageddons can be historical or mythological in nature.

1. See Revelation 16:1-21. Also: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2016&version=NIV.

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"Armageddon" therefore serves as a bridge and the tie that binds the two short stories, separated as they are by a period of forty years. It acts as a symbol, perhaps not only a symbol connecting the two stories, but also many of his other short stories about conflicts and wars and their consequences. Danarto's early short stories, *Godlob* (1968), then (1968) and *Nostalgia* (1969)—landmark short stories on Indonesia's literary map—all have wars as their background. Or, you can say that they all are about Armageddons. To Danarto, the most actual and real arena of Armageddon in contemporary history would be the conflicts and war between Israel and Palestine. He paid close attention to the Palestinian issues and had a profound concern about the protracted conflict that had destroyed so many lives.

> Born and raised on the land of Java, where forms of puppetry[2] exist as entertainment for people from all walks of society, the multitalented artist Danarto, especially during the early period of his artistic practice, often wrote colossal and epic stories, seemingly originating from a factual situation in which a war was being waged. Danarto repeatedly mentioned that throughout his life, he has experienced four wars. Initially, we immediately assumed that the four wars would be the Japanese Occupation (1942–45); the Dutch Military Aggression (1947–49); the pogrom on people suspected of being communists (1965–66) and the New Order dictatorship (1965–98). During this period of anxiety as we witness the neverending massacre in Gaza since 7 October 2023, we reconsidered this assumption. Was the fourth war Danarto meant really the New Order dictatorship? The oppression of the New Order didn't take the form of a war, did it? Did the war Danarto meant take place in Gaza?

To someone who had been witnessing wars almost throughout his life, it would have been difficult for him to move away from wars as a subject. Danarto wrote and created his works in the midst of such an atmosphere. He was a productive author of short stories since 1958 until near the end of his life—he died in 2018—and wrote a number of stories about wars. Among the stories, we found nine that talk about the war in Palestine.

> *In the midst of the war in Gaza, a child slept soundly on the bough of a tree, on her clothes were shining plates of verses, radiating light brighter than the sun. In another world, there was a report of Hamlet witnessing a sculpture of light, whose beams he held in his hands. He twisted and even massaged the light. In Danarto's world, light often exists beyond our imaginations...*

2. The stories in *wayang* originate from the epic stories of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. Both have the characteristics of an epic story– an expansive storyline, historical and traditional achievements of the heroes who have supranatural features, replete with moral teachings and virtues glorifying gods and goddesses, as well as symbols.

Amin al-Husseini & Prof. K.H. Abdul Kahar Muzakkir at the Grand Mosque, Yogyakarta, 29 April 1955.

Those lines introduced a 60-minute programme on the Nayamullah Station, titled *•LI•GH•TS•*, which was aired on Radio Alhara on Wednesday, 4 October 2023, as if heralding what would happen (again) less than a week later. What can we do as art workers? As friends? As human beings? Even if there were a thousand of us, stopping the war would be beyond our capacity. What then? Are we going to stay silent? Are we going to pray? Are we going to hum? What is it that we're going to do? In this limbo, we are trying to get hold of something that is already in our possession, within our capacity, something feasible. Some short stories of Danarto that we remember—almost by heart—lead us to discussions on the expressions of solidarity among the artists who preceded us. Starting from satires, such as the poem by Remy Sylado, "*Kesetiakawanan Asia-Afrika* [Asian-African Solidarity]", 1975;[3] the organisational, such as the Asian-African Journalists' Conference, Asian-African Writers' Conference, Asian-African Film Festival (most of them waned in the seventies); to the political and diplomatic, such as the New Emerging Forces (NEFOS) or the Non-Aligned Movement.

There are many pathways that we can map out to trace the solidarity that Indonesians have had with the Palestinians and other colonised nations. One of these would be the Asian-African Conference (Bandung, 1955). Involving representatives of a third of the world's citizens, the conference, which only took place once, loudly called for liberty, freedom and anticolonialism. There were no concrete results from this meeting apart from virtuous statements about living together with different nations, described in seven points. The fifth point, under the title of "Other problems", states:

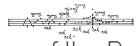
> *In view of the existing tension in the Middle East, caused by the situation in Palestine and of the danger of that tension to world peace, the Asian-African Conference declared its support of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine and called for the implementation of the United Nations Resolutions on Palestine and the achievement of the peaceful settlement of the Palestine question.*[4]

A number of conference participants then went on to tour Indonesia, or at least Java. Journalist and liberation activist Richard Wright, for example, held a number of public activities in Jakarta and Bandung.[5] The same was true for Jerusalem's Grand Mufti Amin al-Husseini, although this was not his first visit to Indonesia. Along with several Egyptian and Palestinian high-ranking personalities, al-Husseini was one of the world figures supporting Indonesia's independence since the day of the Proclamation, with support coming from the Arab League as well as other world leagues. Similarly, the Indonesian nation has also supported the independence of Egypt and Palestine for as long as Indonesia has been an independent country.

3. First published in *Aktuil* magazine, no. 107, 1972.
4. "Final Communiqué of the Asian-African conference of Bandung (24 April 1955)", in https://www.cvce.eu/obj/final_communique_of_the_asian_african_conference_of_bandung_24_april_1955-en-676237bd-72f7-471f-949a-88b6ae513585.html [accessed 12 January 2017].
5. Brian Russell Roberts and Keith Foulcher, eds., *Indonesian Notebook, a sourcebook on Richard Wright and the Bandung Conference* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

The nationalist independence movement, followed by the Asian-African Conference in 1955 that instilled a sense of camaraderie and solidarity among the different nations, has established a tradition among the Indonesian intellectuals, activists and artists to always pay due attention to the oppressed nations and defend them. It is on such a foundation that Danarto's intellectual tradition and history were built. He was one of the artists who often felt restless about the wars occuring in the world, starting from the ones in Afghanistan, Yemen, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda, to the one in Haiti.[6] On several occasions, Danarto expressed his respect for the demonstrations against the American war in Vietnam.[7] Solidarity among nations serves as the basis for Danarto's stance on humanitarian tragedies. Fellow humans are our brothers and sisters whether we love or hate one another, Danarto quoted the Prophet Mohammad PBUH[8] while questioning why today we're seeing a situation that is precisely contrary to that saying. With all our limitations, Danarto wondered, why do humans decide to be independent and act as if we are separate from other humans. To him, it is precisely when humans hate one another that we cannot be separated. Destruction starts when humans try to outdo one another.[9]

"It is impossible for us to reject such universal camaraderie, although with reasons that might sound very noble. *Subhanallah*," he wrote.[10] Danarto was faithful to the journey of art that he had undertaken. When the manslaughter took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina, he wrote a poem titled "Bosnia Herzegovina"[11] and "Semua Hidup untuk Bosnia Herzegovina" [All Lives for Bosnia Herzegovina].[12] We are going to see in this short story collection how Palestine had a special place in Danarto's oeuvre. Through these nine short stories, Danarto expressed his anxiety over the tragedies occurring along the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. *Mashaallah*.

In *Armageddon* (1968), a mother and her daughter fight over a man called Dolly (in the original language, the character's name is "Boneka", which literally means 'puppet'). In  (1978), Danarto for the first time made mention of the Palestinian fighters. *PLO Self-sacrifice Ritual* (1982) dramatically describes the struggle of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and Danarto considers their sacrifices as on a par with those of the people in Bali during their Puputan war in 1946. *Sheets of Light* (1988) presents the story of the tenacity of the Palestinians, using light as the symbol. Meanwhile, in *The Tunnel* (1996) and *O, Jerusalem* (2007), Danarto tells the story of the kindness of Palestinians through children. His last two short stories, *Bethlehem Star* (2008) and *A Camel Went Through the Eye of a Needle* (2009), Danarto borrows some elements from the Christian mythology to depict the miracles occurring on the Land of Palestine. What is interesting here is that his characters are often children, young girls or mothers, who would always be victims of war anywhere.

6. Danarto, *Cahaya Rasul 3; Hikmah Kemasyarakatan* [The Apostle's light: blessings of being part of the society] (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 2000), p. 60.
7. Danarto, *Begitu Ya Begitu tapi Mbok Jangan Begitu* [It is what it is but please don't make it like so] (Yogyakarta: Diva Press, 2016), p. 152.
8. Danarto, *Cahaya Rasul 3*, p. 61.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Danarto's private collection.
12. Published in *Media Indonesia*, 20 November 1992.

War after war passes, pastime
upon pastime converges.[13]

As time went by, from (1978) up to the final short story in this book, *A Camel Went Through the Eye of a Needle* (2009), Danarto's concern for and inclination towards the issues of the Palestinian fight for freedom only strengthened. His considerable worry was that the Israel-Palestine conflict, which often extended to conflicts with Arab nations, would lead to a Third World War that would annihilate the whole world. Israel's significant military might, often with the support of superpower countries, is not comparable to the strength of the Palestinians' struggle. At the same time, the resilience of the Palestinian resistance fascinated and impressed Danarto. Here Danarto witnessed and believed in the miracles that were manifested in the form of little children or sheets of light. The little children and sheets of light were symbols of goodness and truth.

Palestine, in Danarto's stories, is always pulsating. His characters are always in a state of defiance, fighting, resisting and hoping. Every now and then, however, wars make an appearance in his stories, bringing gloom and destroying hopes. Such an anomaly can be seen in the short story *The Walls of Time* (1989), which he wrote a year after he penned the hopeful story *Sheets of Light* (1988).

Despair and suffering came hand in hand, endlessly. I could not possibly bear the agony of losing dozens of my children. At the height of my grief and tears, I made a wish to become a rock. So I turned into a rock.

In the late 1980s in Java, dead bodies on the street were not a rarity. Social order took precedence over citizens' lives. The presence of such killings done on behalf of public order was clear evidence of the "anything goes" approach taken by the authoritarian regime at the time.[14] As dead bodies were found in different neighbourhoods and made the news almost on a daily basis on TV, it was not surprising that throughout Indonesia, citizens became inured to violence. As murders became a day-to-day experience that accompanied us in the background as we took our meals, it was inevitable that we became familiar with it—if not hardened to it. In *The Walls of Time* (1989), the bitterness of hopelessness is present in the character of the mother who turned into a rock after witnessing how her children died in the war.

13. Quoted from the short story of *Godlob* (first published in *Horison*, no. 1, Year III, January 1968, completed on 13 August 1967). In the short story, a father kills his son in war to make sure that the son's gravestone would record him as a hero. In the research that Danarto dkk. undertook and especially in the activities held by Nayamullah, the sentence is often used as a note of encouragement as well as a reason to gather and work together.
14. Justus M. van der Kroef, " 'Petrus': Patterns of Prophylactic Murder in Indonesia", in *Asian Survey*, 25, no. 7 (July 1985): 745–59.

Just by turning into a rock, I've frozen into everything
I've ever known. No weapon can desolate me now.
The atmosphere, space, time have gone away.
Everything is non-existent.

In the Indonesian dictionary, "turning into a rock", *membatu*, means to stay silent. *Batu* literally means a hard object that might come from Earth or any other planet, and obviously it cannot feel anything—it won't cry, won't grieve and therefore won't feel tortured. The symbolism feels even more poignant when the wish to become a rock is not only expressed by the mother, but also by other characters, the journalists who also have witnessed the war. Becoming a rock means being liberated from all forms of pain caused by a protracted war.

When Danarto wrote *The Walls of Time* (1989), the internet did not exist yet, the New Order Regime in Indonesia was at its most violent, and the land grabs in Palestine were continuously marked by a series of significant events—the closest one at the time being the First Intifada of December 1987, which took thousands of lives. Thirty-five years after it was written, the short story *The Walls of Time* (1989) has become even more edifying. Since 7 October 2023 to this day, we have been witnessing the genocide perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinians in Gaza. We have become an audience to it, just like in Danarto's story. How many of us wish to turn into rocks, or have we perhaps actually turned into rocks?

Therefore the director and actors realised
then how dangerous the audience was.[15]

The wish to turn into a rock is an expression of hopelessness in the face of war. The audience feels hopeless as there is nothing it can do. A sense of powerlessness turns into helplessness. But let's wait a moment; let's see how the audience works in Danarto's universe. In Danarto's creative arena, the audience's role is as important as that of the director or actor.[16] The audience is an active subject. It has a bargaining power and must be taken into account. When the audience does its duty in earnest, the actors and directors inevitably come face to face with a powerful subject. Danarto's thoughts about the audience are aligned with Paulo Freire's ideas that have been prominent since the 1970s in places where colonisation took place and even evolved.

15. Danarto, "Menuju Teater Tanpa Penonton: 'Para Penonton, Seranglah Pertunjukan!' ", in *Obrog Owok-owok Ebreg Ewek-ewek* (Jakarta: Penerbit Nalar, 2014), p. 87.
16. Ibid., pp. 85–8.

Paulo Freire's ideas, which became familiar to us through his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), try to encourage the oppressed to nurture the need to leave their positions as victims and try to fight for their liberation as human beings. Three key words to this idea are: Curiosity as epistemology, perseverance as a method and the right thinking.[17] Equipped with the phrase of "theatre without an audience", Danarto only had the chance to test these ideas a few times.[18] A number of reviews and essays consider his ideas quite thoroughly defining Danarto's trials as an exhilarating and fun spectacle and phenomenon. However, there has never been any analysis on how the danger that the audience poses can affect the actors and director.

Today, we live in an era in which the audience immediately becomes a part of all kinds of performances. The equality between the positions of the audience and the actors and director is no longer something to be fought for. The audience no longer needs to struggle for its liberation from the clutch of the actors or director. The audience even has its own market. In the world of manga, the cosplay market is bigger than that of the comics themselves. The business and marketing people would say: the customer is king. The liberals would believe that: the public is the master. The socialists would proclaim: Vox populi! On social media, the netizens grab more attention than any celebrity whose posts become an arena for competing comments. The danger of the audience is real in our daily lives.

We are the audience that have managed to liberate ourselves, to be emancipated and to emancipate our surroundings, or live in the era of freedom that we used to long for—at least what Danarto and Freire dreamed of. Have we become a dangerous audience? Have we made use of this powerful danger? Since 7 October 2023, what kind of audience have we become? Have we turned into rocks? We have a duty. We are engaged. We can be engaged.

17. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2005).
18. Danarto's ideas of a "Theatre *sans* Audience" started to become quite well-known in 1978, along with the theatrical performance of Bel Geduwel Beh (11–15 November 1978, Teater Arena, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta), in which Danarto played the role of the playwright and director. On that occasion, Danarto also used Teater Tanpa Penonton [Theatre *sans* Audience] as the name of the theatrical group performing the play. In his interview with *Kompas* daily, Danarto explained, "The group's name Teater Tanpa Penonton actually reflects the concept of our folk theatre. I want the audience to engage with the stage life I create, so much so that it would seem the audience is present in the lives unfolding on the stage. Therefore, it's as if there's no more audience. The audience and the actors: becoming one." (Sudibyanto, "Danarto Sutradara "Bel Geduwel Beh": Penonton dan Pemain Adalah Satu", *Kompas*, 14 November 1978).

Armageddon

PROVENANCE

The Indonesian version of "Armageddon" is published in:

- *Horison*, June 1969;
- *Godlob: kumpulan cerita pendek* [Godlob: short story collection] (Jakarta: Rombongan "Dongeng dari Dirah", 1975)
- *8 cerita pendek* [8 short stories] (Ende: Nusa Indah, 1977);
- *Laut biru langit biru: bunga rampai sastra Indonesia mutakhir* [Blue seas blue skies: collection of contemporary Indonesian literature], ed. Ayip Rosidi (Bandung: Pustaka Jaya, 1977 & 2023);
- *Godlob: kumpulan cerita pendek* [Godlob: short story collection] (Jakarta: Grafitipers, 1987);
- *Godlob* (Yogyakarta: Matahari, 2004);
- *Godlob* (Yogyakarta: Basabasi, 2017); and
- *Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon* [From Jerusalem to Armageddon], ed. Danarto dkk. (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2024).

The English version featured in this publication is translated by Harry Aveling, previously published in:

- *From Surabaya to Armageddon: Indonesian short stories*, edited and translated by Harry Aveling (Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976);
- *Abracadabra*, trans. Harry Aveling (Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong: Heinemann Educational Books, 1978); and
- *Abracadabra*, trans. Harry Aveling (Jakarta: Metafor Publishing, 2001).

A Japanese version of this short story, 「ハルマゲドン」 [Harumagedon] is published in:

- 現代インドネシア文学への招待 [Aoi umi aoi sora - Gendai Indonesia bungaku henoshoutai/Blue seas blue skies - An invitation to modern Indonesian literature], trans. 柴田 紀男 (Norio Shibata) and 松尾　大 (Hiroshi Matsuo), ed. Ayip Rosidi (Tokyo: Mekong Publishing, 1993).

TRANSLATION NOTES

Bekrakak-an

In the Bahasa Jawa - Bahasa Indonesia (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1993) dictionary, *bekrakakan* means clucking here and there (about hens) or getting confused here and there. Another close word is *bekakak* which means animal or human for the offering ritual. *Dibekakak* means roasted whole (chicken). Meanwhile, the words *bekakrah* or *mbekakrah* mean ravaged or scattered. The other, *bekakasan*, means jungle ghost.

EDITORS' NOTES

Armageddon has been described as the place where the end of time will happen (Revelation to John, or the Apocalypse of St. John, 16:16). Therefore it is unsurprising that 'Armageddon' is often referred to in popular culture as the ultimate war between good and evil. In "O Jerusalem", Danarto described Armageddon as a village located in Palestine.

The time stamp of this short story (Bandung, 24 June, 1968) indicates that it was written around the time of the first commemoration of Naksa, the six-day war in 1967 when Israel seized the entire Palestinian territory. Since 1968, 5 June has been commemorated as the day of Palestinian displacement (Naksa Day). Another event that might have informed Danarto would be Nakba Day, a commemoration of the 1948 killings of almost a million people in Palestine, on 15 May.

Based on a 1984 interview, Danarto considered the anthology containing this short story published by Nusa Indah (1977) as an unauthorised publication (see: Th. Sri Rahayu Prihatmi, *Fantasi dalam kedua cerpen Danarto: Dialog antara dunia nyata dan tidak nyata* [Fantasy in the short stories of Danarto: Dialogue between the real and the non-real] (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1993), pp. 35–36). He recounted that he had returned the honorarium and withdrawn his manuscript from Nusa Indah in 1975 so that it could be published by Rombongan "Dongeng dari Dirah" [The "Tale from Dirah" company]. In *8 cerita pendek* [8 short stories], each short story is accompanied by a drawing by Danarto.

Straight, ageless rocks grew from the barren earth. Grasshoppers tore at their wings and pulled them out. The grass wilted in His heat. Barren plain, rock plain, grass plain, scrub plain. The grasshoppers squatted on the rocks and He smashed the rocks to dust. The pale wind blew the dust to every corner of the compass. Rocks. A barren plain full of rocks. Large rocks. Very large. Blocks. Square. With grass growing here and there. Sparse. Growing with difficulty. The wind blew rapidly and its heat seared the skin. The stale air choked the lungs. The grass, dried, was uprooted, flung away and carried by the wind, beat against the piles of rock, stumbled and ran again, further, still further, beat against the rock piles again, floundered, head over heels, tangled and finally arrived at a large gaping hole, beaten endlessly in the rock by the wind. It beat backwards and forwards, unable to escape from the broad gaping rock mouth until it finally broke the whole pile apart, condemned to repeating the action its whole life long, like the wind. The grass bowed. Thought ran endlessly in its head—nothing else moved as fast—suddenly it was struck rapidly by the attacking wind and reduced to a frenzy. The grass tossed unconsciously, whipped by the wind, burnt by the sun and beaten by the rock at an end, confused and disappointed. Fortunately it had travelled quickly that defenceless day. It was grateful, and as it closed its eyes forever, it thought: "I would rather go nowhere than anywhere if I didn't know where I was going."

It bowed, not going anywhere, and watched other grass driven right and left by the wind. His parents? His brothers? His friends? Or were the flying grasses his neighbours? They had escaped the rock mouth, but they had not escaped.

"Don't go, my child," said the chief clump as her child was torn from her.

"Nowhere and anywhere are the same, mother," the child said as it blew away rapidly, vanished from sight, leaving only his barely audible voice, lost in the roar of the wind.

Barren plain, rock plain. Flying dust. Wasteland. A bare plain collecting echoes of all the voices in the city. Arid music stripped by the sun, fierce horror harvested by the sighing sickle wind. Stones and grass joined in eternal friendship, eternal sorrow...

At night the barren plain was silent. The sun had long set. The mood was tense. Bereft of noise, the wasteland began to sleep, motionless.

"Where are you, my child?" a mother moaned, spoke, half thought. Half asked and half wondered. A noble mother, dressed as a beautiful queen, smooth golden skin, long soft black hair. Each step was scented and her whole body radiated beauty and intelligence. A slice of watermelon moon was nailed in the sky.

Suddenly a black shadow covered her.

"You startled me, Ugly!" she said, looking up and watching the black moving shadow. The black thing flew around laughing and the woman smiled.

"I always do! Forgive me, lovely lady!" replied the black thing as it flew backwards and forwards over her head.

"You bore me," mother said with a smile.

"People always say that. Boring. Boring. But they always want to see my face. Once they do, they run away as fast as they can. Ha, ha! I am indeed pure, the companion of every man's loneliness."

"Yet you are no one's friend," she said as she leaned on a heap of rocks.

The black thing flew around in circles and landed on a nearby heap. The moon shone on it. The black thing was very strange. It had a head, no body, just a throat, lungs, heart, spleen, veins and nerves and an anus. It was horrible and repulsive. Its round head was covered with hair. Its face was scarred. No teeth. Its forehead had been gouged with a chisel and suggested great suffering. It was called Bekakrak-an, and it flew high and fast like an eagle, or a kite with a dangling tassel tail. The woman smiled. Bekakrak-an smiled. The watermelon moon looked on in horror.

"Why are you alone, dear mother?" Bekakrak-an asked.

"I am with you, with the rocks, the earth and the grass. Don't pretend otherwise," she replied with a smile.

"I know. We never have the words to describe our situation properly, do we? But... are you looking for something?"

"No, nothing. I have lost nothing. Do you sometimes feel that an essential part of this world has disappeared?"

"No. Only run away."

"That's what I'm looking for."

The wasteland was covered in cold. The rocks drank in the dew.

"Who has run away?"

"My only child."

"Is the child as beautiful as its mother?"

"Yes, she is."

"How long ago?"

"Five days and nights."

"How strange. Who with?"

"Who with? Who knows? With someone, perhaps. Or something, at least."

"No kidding!"

"That's why I keep searching."

Bekakrak-an flapped his innards. Mother smiled. Desolation ruled.

"Hooo! So this is the end!" laughed Bekakrak-an.

"Of what?"

"Lots of things."

"Is there an end?"

"If there isn't, why do you chase after her and worry?"

"I'm not worried. Why should I be?"

"Well, why do you chase after her, then?"

"So that I can find out who she ran away with."

The moon coagulated. The sky was dumb. They heard a pair of feet dragging through the dust behind the rocks.

"Oh body, save thy soul. If I had known heaven was like this, I would have had my soul love its body better," sang a girlish voice. The voice filled the plain for a moment. The girl tottered along.

"A barren plain of rocks. Cactus bushes with bamboo-sharp needles. Harsh vibrations are cruelly haunting. High-pitched hot lust," sang Bekakrak-an with a smile.

"My child!" mother exclaimed. She ran forward to meet her.

"Mother..." the girl replied, as she too ran forward. They embraced lovingly. Bekakrak-an watched and fluttered his intestines, puffing up his lungs like a car horn.

"Good god! You're naked, child! Where are your clothes?"

"Nowhere, mother."

"Where are your clothes?"

"You're wearing them."

"You're drunk!"

"Intoxicated."

"Cactus bushes with bamboo-sharp needles, alas," interrupted Bekakrak-an.

"Shut up, Ugly!" replied mother, turning sharply towards him.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself in front of Bekakrak-an?"

"There are no secrets anymore, mother."

"The world gave up shame long ago," Bekakrak-an cut in. He laughed and stared, trying to swallow the beautiful, moonlit, nude body.

"Where are your clothes?"

"You're wearing them."

"Oh, my child!" said mother, embracing her.

"You are absent-minded. I wear your clothes, you wear mine. Often."

"Impossible."

"Why mother? I am you and you are I. The child is the mother and the mother the child."

"Impossible. So far, anyway."

"It has happened before, mother."

"Cactus bushes with bamboo-sharp needles," Bekakrak-an sang.

"Shut up!" snapped mother.

The atmosphere grew tense.

"The scales are one-sided tonight," said Bekakrak-an.

"A good mother knows when to love and when to be angry. Do you think I am tipping the scales, Bekakrak-an?"

"The moon is my witness," he replied.

"All right. I will show you, the moon, the stones and the grass that I am a wise mother," she said fiercely, her face dark red in the moonlight. She went to the girl.

"Five days and nights. Who were you with?"

"Someone."

"Who?"

"Someone I love, mother."

"Who?"

"Anyone."

The mother grabbed the girl and shook her violently.

"How dare you mock your own mother who carried you so lovingly for nine months and ten days!"

"You didn't have much choice."

"My dear! I sacrificed everything for you."

"Your mother sacrificed everything for you, her mother sacrificed everything for her. And so on and so on..."

[202.145.6.3] Project MUSE (2026-02-20 10:41 GMT)

"The scales tip further," said Bekakrak-an with a smile.

Mother hit her child across the face and the child fell sidewards against the rocks. She cried with the pain. Her shoulder hurt.

"If you defy me, then be honest!"

"All right. I'll be honest."

"Who was he?"

"Dolly."

"Do—lly? Oh God!!! But he's mine, child!"

Time and space vanished temporarily. Mother looked worried. She stared upwards. The child was sad. Then mother was angry and glared at her. She retreated little by little around the rocks.

"This time you have gone too far!"

"Forgive me, mother."

"Dolly is mine. No one can take him from me."

"I'm sorry. I didn't know. I swear I didn't."

"Don't lie! You modern girls all pretend you don't care what your parents do."

"God forgive me. If I had known he was my mother's fancy man..."

"Lies! You knew it all right. You deliberately took him from me!"

"No! no! He loves me."

"Mendacious! He loves no one but me."

"Please yourself. He was with me for five days."

"You stole him."

"I did not!"

"Shut up!"

Mother advanced on her like a tiger on a deer.

"Five days and five nights. What were you doing with my Dolly?"

"Oh mother..."

"Tell me..."

The child retreated around the rocks, sobbing.

"Nervousness scatters when discipline comes. Excitement ends in other men's beds," sang Bekakrak-an.

"Shut up, Bekakrak-an!" mother snapped.

"I can imagine just how cosy it all was. Did you talk all the time? Tell me!"

"Oh mother..."

"Throw peanut shells at each other? Play drop-the-hanky? Tell me!"

"Mother... I'm sorry."

"Do you think you can get rid of your heinous sin just like that? I don't care what you do. As long as you don't do it with my man."

She seized the girl around the throat and squeezed until a strangled gasp came from her throat. Then she let her go again. The child gasped for air.

"How many times?"

"Mother!!!"

"Tell me!!!"

"Oh mother... " The girl cried as she struggled against the rocks.

Mother sighed fiercely.

"Perhaps you are too ashamed to tell me. There are a few secrets left, after all. Bekakrak-an!" mother called. Bekakrak-an had been watching quietly. He turned to mother. "I will search until I have absolute proof, until all my accusations are proven true. Only then will I be satisfied. Please, Bekakrak-an, will you find me the evidence I want?"

"Don't worry," replied Bekakrak-an with a broad grin, displaying his rotting gums. "I am pure. I keep in my hands all that happens and everything everyone remembers. You'll know it all soon enough, wise mother."

"No! Please, Bekakrak-an, don't!" the girl shouted as she knelt before the strange creature. Bekakrak-an smiled and fluttered his innards. Mother dragged her away.

"A girl like you deserves no mercy. Soon you shall see everything you did with my Dolly the last five days and nights."

"Mother, no! Bekakrak-an, don't! I beg you! God have mercy on me...."

Bekakrak-an laughed. Mother smiled.

"Do as I tell you, Bekakrak-an."

"As you wish!" Bekakrak-an leapt up nimbly and flew in circles. He laughed so horribly that even the wilted grass stood in fright.

"Please, someone stop him. Oh God, please. Yes, You! Please stop this! Please?" she shouted pathetically into the air. Her sobbing filled the barren plain.

"God can't, child. He has too many other things to attend to," mother said as she knocked her down again.

"The stage is ready! Lights!" shouted Bekakrak-an from the air. A well-lit stage spread before them. Bekakrak whirled, laughing in the air, laughing at the two rigid women.

"Actors! Ready!" shouted Bekakrak-an as he perched on a stone. A naked man and woman appeared from the right and left of the stage. The women watched in astonishment.

"Is that me?" whispered the girl in astonishment.

"Is that Dolly?" whispered the mother in astonishment.

They were tense. The moon did not move. Neither did the women. Bekakrak-an blinked and smiled broadly.

The barren plain focused on the two performers.

"You have ploughed the depths of my love. My whole body trembles. I am on fire. Come quickly, I whisper," the actress said to her tall, handsome partner.

The stage boiled. The curtains shook.

"I come, my phosphorescent love, bringing you warm milk. My beloved, you stretch beautifully and eagerly into the sky, like a New York skyscraper," the actor replied, reaching out for her.

"Hooo!" shouted Bekakrak-an. "What dialogue."

The barren plain sighed. The air itched with desire.

The two actors, dressed in light like gods, embraced passionately.

"Dolly, darling, take me!" pleaded the actress.

"You are in my power. I don't have to force you, do I?"

"You must!" she shouted, shaking him. "You must! Oh Dolly, take me! Purge me! Be fierce with me! Obscene! Utterly. I am yours, tonight and forever. Destroy me! I crave ecstasy!"

"Stop, Bekakrak-an, stop!" the two women shouted, unable to watch any more. They embraced. Bekakrak-an flew around and around the stage and gradually the two actors and the stage disappeared into the barren plain. The strange creature's laughter filled the land and he squatted once more on a rock.

"Was that really me?" the girl sobbed in a whisper. "Oh, mummy, Bekakrak-an, no more. I'm sorry. Really I am. No more, please."

"Dolly?" the mother whispered, sobbing. "Was that really you, my darling Dolly? I can't believe it. You? With someone else?"

The two women wept.

"Your defiance meant nothing. Words, words. Your wisdom meant nothing," shouted Bekakrak-an.

"No!" the woman shouted back, wiping her eyes. "I am only resting." She grabbed her daughter by the hair and dragged her around. The child wilted, broken.

"Mother, mother! I give in. Stop. I surrender. No more, Bekakrak-an, no more. I'll tell you how many times. I'll tell you."

"That's better. Go on, how many times? Tell me!"

"Hooo!" shouted Bekakrak-an. "Come on, sweet child, confess. So many days and so many nights make so many times. Hooo! A schoolchild could work it out!"

The mother dragged her around until her white body was covered with dust. The plain enjoyed the spectacle and smiled at the beautiful woman rolling in its lap. The moon looked away.

"Get the stage ready again, Bekakrak-an!"

"No! No more!"

"Confess! Tell me!"

"Oh mummy... 20 times..."

"You little animal!!!" the mother shouted. She threw the girl against the rocks. The girl slumped into a coma. Bekakrak-an flew round and round her elegant body, laughing. Nothing else moved.

When the girl regained consciousness, she found herself tightly pressed against a wall of rock, her two hands stretched wide apart and her feet tied together. She looked right and left and saw that the ropes went right around the rocks. She groaned. The bracelets hurt. The pain was intense.

"Oh body, save thy soul. If I had known hell was like this, I would have had my soul tell its body to go elsewhere," she cried.

"Goodbye, child. If nature will sacrifice itself for you, you will be saved. But if it hates you as much as I do, you will be destroyed. Ask nature to decide," mother said, weeping. She went to the girl and kissed her on the forehead. Then she turned to leave.

"Hooo!" shouted Bekakrak-an. "Most unjust. Don't bring nature into this. Nature had nothing to do with it. If you bring nature in, you open your own life to outside interference and cruelty. Do you want your own life ruined?"

"You're right, Bekakrak-an," replied mother.

"That's better. Look at her. Take a good look," Bekakrak-an said with a smile. "Look at those gentle, soft hands. Those hands that fondled Dolly's body."

"You're right, Bekakrak-an."

"Look at those marble thighs. They touched Dolly. Calf against calf, heel against heel."

"You're right, Bekakrak-an."

"That's better. Cut them off. They stole Dolly."

"You're right, Bekakrak-an."

Mother turned back to her child like lightning. Bekakrak-an flew and dived down to her with an axe in his teeth. Mother took the axe and Bekakrak-an flew into the air laughing. "Mother, don't believe him. He is ugly, revolting, awful!" the daughter shouted with tears in her eyes. But Mother appeared not to hear her and swung the axe into the air.

"Mother!!!" The girl's shout was lost in the noise of a logger axe at work. The logger's face was red as she worked. As red as Satan. The body, freed of its bonds, fell to the ground. The legs stood upright. Blood spurted everywhere, wetting the rocks, the earth, the grass and splashing mother's face. Bekakrak-an laughed and dropped filth onto the girl.

Mother stood stiffly. Her face and body were covered with blood. The axe was covered with blood and she held it tightly. The watermelon moon trembled in terror.

The ground was covered with blood. Bekakrak-an hung on a rock. Mother stood transfixed. The girl rolled in the dust.

"Mother..." the head and trunk cried. The mother was startled. She threw the axe away and fell on the girl, embraced her and kissed her dirty, bleeding body. She howled.

"My child... my child," she cried and kissed the girl's cheeks, forehead, eyes, nose and neck. "Oh my child, my child. God forgive me. Oh god!! What have I done? My soul is stained by her very blood. How could I do such a thing? How could I?"

"Oh mummy ... it hurts."

"Oh my child, forgive your shameless mother. I was lost in the valley of great darkness. Something dragged me there, I didn't want to go."

"Oh body, save thy soul. If I had known that pleasure would bring forth such pain, and pain such pleasure, I would have had my soul tell its body never to be born."

"Oh my darling, my own, my own precious memory."

"Hoo!" shouted Bekakrak-an as he flew around the crying women. "The gentle earth does not give life. If a mother is weak, how can the nation be strong?"

"You are right, Bekakrak-an!" the mother suddenly shouted.

"That's better. Be reasonable. Look at those rose red lips—imagine them biting Dolly."

"You're right, Bekakrak-an!!"

"Well then, cut her head off!"

"You're right!!!"

She kicked the body and head and then grabbed the axe of dust, iron and blood that she had thrown down. Her face contorted with rage, she separated the sweet face from its body. Blood squirted from the neck like oil in the desert.

Mother stood and watched in horror.

Bekakrak-an laughed. He sucked in the blood. When he had sipped the last drop, his face was red, and he laughed warmly. His thirst was quenched. The blood spread through his neck, lungs, heart, spleen, gizzards, veins and nerves.

A flow of red blood.
The sky was blood
the air blood
the wasteland blood
the rocks blood
the grass blood
the watermelon moon trembled like a bloodshot eye.

Bekakrak-an took mother aside. The horror changed to revulsion. She held the axe tightly and the blood dripped from it. She was suddenly conscious.

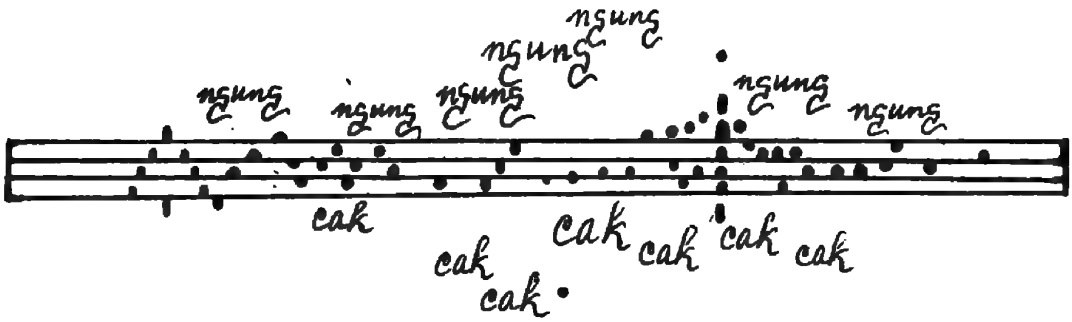
"I looked for her everywhere. Where were you?"

"She was nowhere. She was here all the time. She never left you. She's a good girl," said Bekakrak-an with a laugh.

Far in the distance, behind the rocks, mother saw Dolly with a young girl.

The watermelon moon wept blood.
The sky wept blood.
the light wept
the wasteland wept
the rocks wept
the grass wept.

Bandung, 24 June 1968



cerita pendek Jakarta

18.8.78

PROVENANCE

The Indonesian version of this short story is published in:

- *Horison*, January 1979;
- *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia: kumpulan karangan* [Indonesian New Art Movement: collection of essays], ed. Jim Supangkat (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia, 1979);
- *Adam Ma'rifat: kumpulan cerita pendek* [Adam the wisdom of God: short story collection] (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1982);
- *Adam Ma'rifat* [Adam the wisdom of God] (Yogyakarta: Matahari, 2004);
- *Adam Ma'rifat* [Adam the wisdom of God] (Jakarta: Basabasi, 2017); and
- *Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon* [From Jerusalem to Armageddon], ed. Danarto dkk. (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2024).

The English version featured in this publication is translated by Rani Elsanti for Danarto dkk.

A Turkish version of this short story is also available, translated by Sabiq Muhammad Al Ghozi, Muhammad Alif Shydqi, Hanif Raihan, Ammar Muhammad Hilmy Zaydan and Amadea Putri Zafira, edited by Bihter Çetinyol, in the event of Loka-Loka: 'cak ngung'—an assembly (19 September 2022), an open transliteration workshop hosted by Nayamullah Station during the 17th Istanbul Biennial at Barın Han (Istanbul) and held in collaboration with the Indonesian Student Association in Istanbul (İstanbul'daki Endonezya Öğrencileri Birliği). This version is not yet published.

EDITORS' NOTES

Danarto finished writing this short story on 18 August 1978, four years after the United Nations finally recognised the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO, 1974), despite the PLO having worked for 10 years for the liberation of Palestine. This is the first time that Danarto mentioned the PLO in a short story.

Bali, the location in which the story is set, is the only Hindu-majority province in Indonesia. The island is located in the eastern top of Java, the most populated island in Indonesia where Danarto resides. Danarto went back and forth to Bali between 1973–74 for the preparation of *Dongeng dari Dirah* [Tale from Dirah], a dance performance choreographed by Sardono W. Kusumo and first staged under the title, *La Sorcière de Dirah* [The sorceress of Dirah] in Chaillot National Theatre, Paris, 26 February–24 March 1974.

TRANSLATION NOTES

Cak-ngung

The title of this story is an image that looks like a music notation with the words *cak* and *ngung* spread around it. Throughout the story, *cak* and *ngung* appear in different formats, some as if it is a concrete poetry whilst another set casually amidst a common paragraph. *Cak* refers to the sound sung by *Kecak* dancers. *Kecak* is a traditional Balinese dance performed without musical instruments. Instead, the dancers sing, imitating the sounds of the gamelan. *Ngung* is the humming sound of the SMPVTU or disintegrator machine.

Sanghyang Jaran

Sanghyang Jaran is a sacred Balinese dance only performed in religious rituals. The dance involves male dancers dancing whilst riding bamboo horses until they are possessed by the spirit of the god's horse. When possessed, the dancer will walk on the burning embers of coconut shells and husks.

Banten and *Cili*

Banten is a form of offering in Balinese rituals which contains several kinds of natural products, representing certain natural elements. *Banten* is offered as an expression of gratitude to God for the natural riches given. *Cili* is a means for worshipping Goddess Sri as a symbol of fertility. It is usually made from pandan or palm leaves which are shaped to resemble the figure of a goddess and mounted on a *banten*.

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MANILA
JAKARTA
PARIS
BANJAR BUN
BALI
SANGHYANG JARAN
KOMPUTER
ELEKTRONIK AKUSTIK
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GEORGE BENSON

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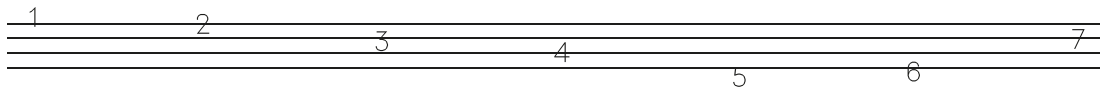

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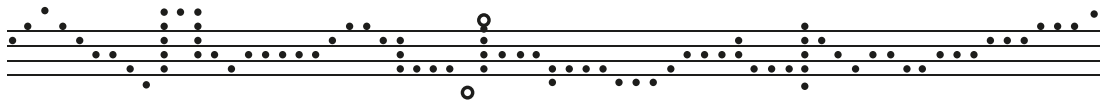

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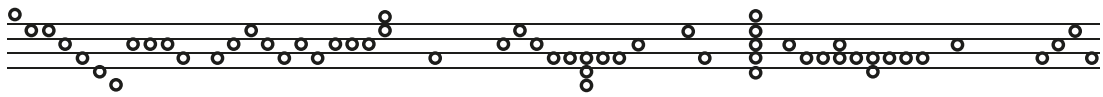

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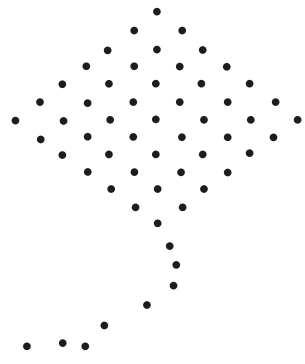

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unifying
music
for
a
sacred
dance
Sanghyang
Jaran

In preparation for the ritual, two male dancers can be seen kneeling at the temple, in front of the shrine and the hall of a small, tall building with a thatched roof, facing the burning incense, breathing in the smoke while neighing, indicating that the Horse God has possessed their spirits... ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung... while the SMPVTU (let me call this a disintegrator machine) that belongs to a computer of the music "laboratory" owned by Otto Weizenbergen, a German music composer, my old friend who has often explored Indonesia, is transferring the data received by a mini-screen similar to a TV screen of around 11 x 27 cm^2 in size, which has been properly installed, complete with a fully-revolving lens and a highly-sensitive recorder, which is now recording the events and scenes... ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung... the ear feels it, but the noise isn't actually audible, like the smoke of the burning incense... kist kist kist kist kist kist kist kist kist... except for the small crackling sparks of the charcoal or the hissing of the incense... a cacophony of sounds

ngung cak ngung klst i'i'i'ikr interspersed with neighs cakcak cak i'i'i'krr i'i'

sszosssssssssssssssssssssssssszzzzzzz sssszzzzzz

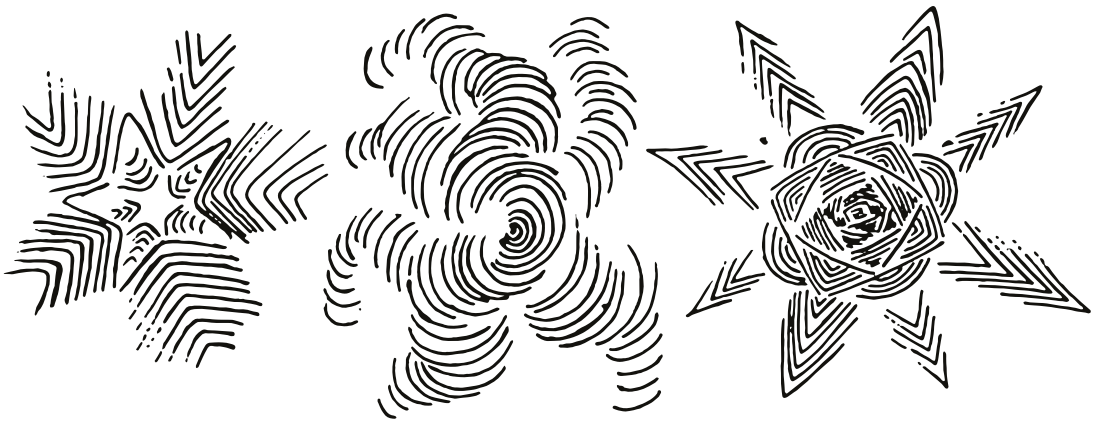
klui
klui
klui
klui
klui
klui
klui
klui klui
klui
klui

as if catching the popping sounds of the bed of burning charcoal of 120 cm wide and 400 cm long, solid-looking, glowing embers, looking vicious, as well as the ritual paraphernalia of the sacred dance

klui
klui
klui
klui
klui
klui
klui

interspersed with the sounds of prayers captured by the disintegrator, becoming truly solidified.

The disintegrator machine is indeed used specifically for the disintegration of sounds, for the exploration of possibilities in musical compositions. We're able to see the flesh and blood of the music. I devote my attention to the small screen, as if I'm as busy as Otto, operating the disintegrator buttons, making the physical body of the music visible, incandescent on the screen, sometimes in the form of long lines in blue, orange and red, followed by other lines in green, yellow, white, violet, with other lines crashing into them, roaring from above and below, or extraordinarily-clear iridescent squiggles, while the whirring of the silent computer is still audible, still "captured by the ear" ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung interspersed by the cak chorus in an intricate ebb and flow, rich in colours cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak... in my mind, everything has been transformed into a pleasurable diversion. "Otto, try to increase the volume and zoom in on each 'cak' colour, please." "Would you like to have a look?" he offers, keeping his hands busy with all the buttons, levers and switches. The shapes of the sound enlarge and expand to fill the screen:



The colour combination of the sounds and shapes are akin to a gemstone pierced by light, while also radiating light from within; go ahead, combine them all; those who are truly splintering crystals, aglow with twinkling light, a frozen lake upon which you suddenly scream, the resulting vibration cracking the surface, the light from your cigarette smoke that you inhale deeply; perhaps a river frozen in the winter, the ice suddenly breaking; the glowing, burning charcoal from your flatiron falling onto the floor; a torch, alone in a dark desert; stars in the sky; meteors, fireflies, with thundering sounds...

"Please add some more incense."
"Add some more charcoal."
"Use a fan."
"Add some more flowers."
"Woof woof woof."
"Ouff ouff ouff"
"The offering."
"Any snack will do."
"Growllll..."
"Mbok Sarwi."
"This ritual."

"Coffee."
"Computer."
"liiirrrk..."
"Flower!"
"Mbok Sarwi, please come this way."
"There you go."
"Try to listen to the glowing charcoal bed."
"Laboratory."
"Toot toot toot toot."
"liiirrrk... liiirrrk..."
"From Germany"
"Tut! Go get some more water!"
"Come here."
"Let's try."
"Come on, stop fooling around!"
"Later."
ng ngung ngung ngung
cak cak cak cak cak
klui klui klui klui
sssZzzzZ zzzz sssss
"Some more coffee, please."
"Oh, no, I'd rather not."
"Yes, it really happened just like that."

s s s sssss s s s s

[202.145.6.3] Project MUSE (2026-02-20 10:41 GMT)

The performance is held under the guidance of a possessed person. The spirit demands that the rituals take the form of a performance. Any kind of performance. It can even take the form of the *bumbung* dance, a social dance that is sometimes perceived to be profane.

Quite a lot of people are following the rituals, kneeling behind the dancers. The dance will take place in the middle of the temple yard; there are many offerings, including the colourful *banten* and *cili*. So very appealing to the eyes and the mouth. Next to the offerings, the chorus sit and chant "*cak cak cak*" continuously, voices with tones and colours. The charcoal bed lies before them, the final battle arena for the dancers in the ritual. Once the dancers are ready, the priestess leads them to the arena. The dancers, neighing and bending their bodies, are wearing the dance costumes similar to the ones worn by the *baris* dancers. They move rhythmically in simple, naive motions, seemingly naturally, apparently under someone's control, sometimes funny, sometimes slow, sometimes naive; it is where the sought-after genuine dance resides, the essence of movements that originate from the movements of nature, the place to which dances should return. Sometimes the movements look so foreign, difficult to understand, perhaps because we rarely observe the movements that happen in our gardens, the swaying leaves blown by the wind, the walls cracked by a growing tree, the river stream that muddies the banks, the broken cotton seeds that brings the snow-like fluff to faraway places, the landslides, the seeds that turn into fruits, all providing lessons for the dance. I am enjoying all of them, switching from the actual scenes to the mini screen of the disintegrator machine. The Cak Cak Cak Cak Cak Cak Cak Cak Cak Cak chanting of the chorus fills the air, people can sit wherever they want. The priestess moves from the two dancers towards the audience, giving us her blessing by splashing sacred water.

Ng Ngung Ngung Ngung Ngung Ngung Ngung Ngung Otto asks Badung, a young dancer who happens to be with us, to get us a cup of hot coffee from *Mbok* Semi's stall. I've been drinking palm wine myself, making me feel refreshed.

"Can the disintegrator machine give us wrong information?" I ask Otto.

"A cuppa for Otto, *Mbok* Semi!" Badung shouts out loud.

"No. It will never rain."

"Ha! Have you been here long, *Mas* Totok?"

"Mind the cables."

woof woof woof woof woof.

ngrrrrrooooooockkk

"How long will it last?"

k cak cak cak cak c

More and more people huddle together around the mini screen, although we can only see lines there.

"What happens if we press the picture button?"

"I didn't eat at all yesterday."

k cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak c

"*Mbok* Semi is so charming."

"Hey, don't push."

"When are we going back there?"

"The image isn't there."

"Is Rina here?"

"This is the first time I have seen a sacred dance."

"He doesn't know what it means."

"They enjoy the rituals, just as they enjoy *Mbok* Semi's stall."

"Time and space have been conquered in Bali."

"What's the plan for tomorrow?"

"What is this machine anyway?"

"You were here. Now I don't know where they are."
"Whatever is in your dream will soon come true."
"Do you want some sticky rice cake?"
"I'm looking for Made."
"Are there still secrets?"
"He's gone to watch a movie in Denpasar."
"We have to wake up early tomorrow. We have to irrigate the rice fields."
"They say the *Gelodog* mask will be stored in a museum in Paris."
"The image button?"
"We can't capture real things."
"But I like Bossa Nova. Such warm music."
"It's been raining all the time. This is what we call a rainy hot season."
"Do you like dancing?"
"When did they get married?"
"They also find the generator interesting."
ngrok ngrok ngrok
"The art group is still touring the US."

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ng ngung ngung ngung ngung ngung ng
"Who are those dancers?
"She kissed the sacred water."
"Dung, Badung. We'll go and find the *lindung* fish tomorrow."
"Balinese papayas smell so nice."
During the last seconds of the ritual, all the lights are turned off because the dancers of the *Sanghyang Jaran*, or the Horse God, will attack any light they see. The only light that remains visible is the glowing, thick charcoal bed stretching out before us. I ask Otto to cover up the small incandescent light on his machine. The two dancers continue dancing on the vivid red charcoal, barefooted. Then they run back and forth on the bed of glowing charcoal.

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He scoops up the charcoal using his bare hands, pouring it on his body, as if showering.

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He then scatters the glowing charcoal around him.

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CAAAK kc ck c

Otto closely observes the monitor on his machine. The camera is closing in, the ember images are becoming increasingly clearer. Bigger. Bigger still. The embers fill up the screen. A glowing red ball. Otto switches his attention by pressing the image button.

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ngung

The Trojan horse is carried into the city it will soon destroy. Hurrah!
The images on the screen shock me.
"Otto!" I shout. "What's going on here? Don't you dare fabricate things, playing a video tape on the machine."
"It's not me!" he shouts back. "It's the embers. The machine disintegrates the spirit of the embers!!!" he explains.
I look at his tense face. I feel that he is telling the truth.
"The machine is extraordinarily, intensely sensitive," I mutter under my breath, "Did you program it this way?"
"Never," he says without looking at me.
His hands are busy pressing the buttons, seemingly looking for different possibilities.
(Never programmed this machine. Is this an honest answer? I think he's lying.)
"Are you telling the truth, you've never programmed the machine?" I ask him once more.
"I don't know. I don't understand. I only programmed it for the obvious things. Never to this extent," he replies, nodding absent-mindedly. (Is he lying? If he is, why?)

"Impossible," I whisper inadvertently, as if I don't trust him; then he seems to be giving me an answer, but it turns out he means something else as he speaks, "It's impossible for it to be like this. This machine is too feeble to give us such wide-ranging information."
(A recording of events from before the Common Era has made its way into the disintegrator machine. This is too much.)

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The heart-wrenching march of the citizens in *Puputan Badung*, meeting their demise in the hands of the colonisers, down to the youngest citizens... drt drrrrt drtt drrrrt. This machine confounds me. I am lost in thought. A strong feeling strikes me. I'm shivering.
Otto is now stock-still, nodding absently. He still looks tense, absent-mindedly stroking the back of the machine. (Now I really believe in this machine's capability.) "Cable cable cable cable cable cable cable," mutters Otto, too abstract for me to fathom.

The images are changing, scenes are interspersed with glowing embers. Events are shown in flashes, so fast it's difficult to guess what the events are.
A Concorde aircraft is taking off. A ship carrying pilgrims. A quiet beach. A horserace. People playing tennis.
A whale blowing water. (Just like the clip from an ad or from the global news stories that I often watch.) People doing callisthenics. Busy traffic from a big city. A theatrical performance. Glowing embers. The construction of an apartment building. Glowing embers. A scene from a hunting ground. Glowing embers. The atmosphere from an international film festival. Underground train. Paris. New York. London. Tokyo. Jakarta. Calcutta. Famished people. Rome. Los Angeles. Moscow. Sydney. Thousands of people were crying out excitedly. Warsaw. Madrid. A demonstration against the construction of an airport.

It seems as if Otto has been paralysed while watching all of those images.
More people are huddling close, looking at the screen.
Meanwhile, the rituals seem to have been concluded. Only the bed of glowing charcoal remains.

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Then the monitor displays:

A scene from the Paris Metro. Réaumur-Sébastopol station. Two Middle Eastern passengers, a man and a woman, jump onto a train that has just arrived, spewing and swallowing passengers through its sliding doors. The passengers they bump into are startled and they grumble. The woman is a beautiful young woman, tall and lithe. Truly a combination of the West and the East. Her eyes and hair are the beauty of the East. Meanwhile, her nose, lips and body are truly the West. It appears that the young woman always brings beauty with her, totally oblivious to her allure. The man, meanwhile, is like a god from the legends, handsome and flawless.
However, the grumbling passengers move away as they look at the couple. The train departs. Suddenly, we see five people, also from the Middle East, trying to catch the train. There is a sudden tension on the train. Realising the fraught situation, the man steps up and says:
"Have no fear," he says.
"We're not special. We're just normal passengers," says the woman.
But the passengers are downright scared, with reason. The couple are in combat uniforms.

"Don't be afraid. We are unarmed," the man explains.
"We..." the woman starts then stops, looking at the other passengers. Then, she seems to come to a realisation. She looks at her partner's costume and her own. "We're not... no. We're just busy. The uniforms make us diligent and nimble."
The passengers remain silent. They keep an eye on both of them. The man takes out a cigarette but stops in his tracks and puts the cigarette back into his pocket. He remembers that he can't smoke on the train. The Metro is running at full speed. The two passengers move to a corner. The other passengers are still watching them. The train stops at every station. Sentier station. Bourse station. 4 Septembre station. Opéra station. Then, at the Havre Caumartin station, the two passengers step off the train, run and disappear. Apparently they are switching to another train to change direction. The other train arrives, and they jump in just as the doors are sliding shut.
The young woman's jacket is caught in the door. They laugh. They hug each other. They look so intimate with each other, as if they are courting each other. The girl pulls her jacket. The other passengers are watching them, frowning. The couple laugh and hug each other again. The other passengers look away, although they still look suspicious because of the couple's uniforms.
"I told you the clothes don't suit you," the young woman says, deliberately loudly, while pinching the man's nose.
"You think it suits you?" the man retorts.
"Oh, it's okay to look like this once in a while," the young woman replies.
They are hugging each other again. People are keeping an eye on them.
"Perhaps we're late for the carnival."
"Oh well. We'll make our own carnival."
The train is still speeding. The couple are still caressing each other. St-Augustin station. Miromesnil. St-Philippe-du-Roule. Franklin D. Roosevelt. The train moves at a monotonous speed. Alma Marceau. Iéna. At Trocadéro station, the couple step off and run. People are startled. The couple get out at the station. They're trying to stop a taxi when suddenly... drrrt drrrt drrt rrrt... shots are fired, aimed at them. It's from the five people who have missed the train at Réaumur Sébastopol, who are now within fifty metres from the couple. The couple lie down. So do others around them. Some others run away in confusion. The taxi stops for a while, but when shots are heard, it speeds away. The couple stand up and bravely cross

the very busy and dangerous road. Cars screech as drivers hit their brakes. You can hear curses and swearing from the drivers and passengers.
Drrrrt drrrrt drrrrt rrrrt... large volleys of gunfire ring out, following them. The five people are crossing the road as well, running after the couple. The traffic turns into chaos. A truck driver steps out, arms akimbo. He's swearing, his eyes are following them. The couple keep on running, ducking down all the while. The young woman is quite a fast runner. They're heading towards Palais de Chailliot, where a jazz concert is taking place. Oh, apparently it's George Benson and his friends, performing the tender tune of "We are in Love", making the couples in the audience more intimate, cuddling each other. Some are dancing on the spot.

Drrrrt drrrrt drrrrt rrrrt. The volleys of gunshots can be heard again, with the shots aimed at the sky. The couple sneak away through the vast audience, who at least do not seem disturbed by the gun shots. The hunters too run into the crowd. Meanwhile, George Benson is swaying on the stage with his guitar, in the comfort of spring, and a group of spectators in a corner is temporarily upset by the chase. The victims appear, running down the stairs at the plaza, towards the left. Sneaking away among the high walls, when... drrt drrrrrt drrrrtt... a volley of gunshots fired by the hunters create holes in the walls. The couple go into a theatre, and before they are caught, the Parisian police appear, blocking the hunters.
Drrrrrt drrrrt drrrrrt rrrrrtt... bang... drrrrrrt.... bbbbmmmm... bbbbhhmmm... gunfire is exchanged between the hunters and the police, as the former ignore the warning shot fired by the police towards the sky. Chaos ensues among the audience, as people run headlong in all directions. The police cease firing because they don't want to hit the audience. The jazz concert suddenly comes to a stop and is practically over. The women are screaming, trying to find shelter.

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suddenly
audience of the
disintegrator machine
start chanting anew startling Otto and me
they go around the machine walking ever so slowly
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I run to find the priestess. I come across all of you, still chatting at *Mbok* Sami's stall.

I hurry to her house when you tell me that she has gone home. Badung is taking me there. I knock on the door and fortunately she has not yet gone to bed. She opens the door, looking baffled.

"Dear Priestess, we have a new chorus, arising from the audience," I tell her.
"What do you mean?" The priestess doesn't understand me.
"The audience who watched the dancing ritual suddenly started chanting *cak cak cak*."
"Seriously?"
"The whole audience. All of a sudden. There. You can hear it from here, Ma'am."

The priestess hurries to the location, I follow her with Badung who keeps on chattering unintelligibly. As we arrive at the location, the priestess is transfixed, nodding.

"What..." I was going to ask her, but I think it would be best to leave my sentence unfinished.

Otto approaches the priestess, leaving his computer on, surrounded by the new choir consisting of members of the audience.

"They seem to really like the computer," Otto tries to joke.
"Indeed," the priestess says with conviction.
Otto frowns while looking at me.
"So you mean..."
"There's no sign of a desire for another ritual or a new ritual," the lady interjects. "Apparently they're possessed by the computer."
"Possessed by the computer?" Otto and I are stunned.
"Indeed," the priestess confirms.
"How is that possible..." Otto mutters while walking towards his machine.

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cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak cak

"How do you know they're possessed by the computer?" I quiz her.
"That question is akin to asking how you find out whether you're hungry or full."
"But you understand what the machine is."
"Of course."
Otto approaches us and asks us to bear witness to what might happen.

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As he turns off the computer, the members of the chorus fall to the ground, unconscious, as if dead.

"This is impossible," Otto says, "How did you know they were possessed by the computer?"
"Well, now you know about it yourself," the lady says.
"What do we have to do to wake them up?" Otto asks.
"Turn the computer back on," answers the priestess.
"Not use sacred water?" I ask.
"If they're connected to the computer, it would be best for us to leave the connection undisturbed," the priestess explains.
"How is this possible?" Otto mumbles.

"The Balinese are very sensitive. It is easy for them to establish connections with anything and anyone, old and new. They can sleep in a ramshackle hut or stay in an international hotel," the lady explains.

Otto turns his computer back on and people regain their consciousness, slowly waking as if from a deep sleep. The priestess pulls them away from the computer one by one.

At dawn we fix the "laboratory" to return to Kuta, a beach where youngsters gather from all over the world. Otto forgot to bring the glowing pieces of coal. In the morning, Otto wakes me up, bringing me the morning's newspaper. I wake up lazily, looking at the headline: Schism in the Palestine Liberation Organization. Also about a jazz concert that ended prematurely. I jump out of bed.

"Otto!" My shock intensifies as the newspaper reports on a chase in the Paris Metro.

Otto merely strokes the computer and the disintegrator machine. Every incident reported in the newspaper is exactly the same as what we saw on the monitor of the disintegrator machine. Then there is the still-unclear news about the chase. Are they members of the conservative faction chased by the hardliners, both parties being members of the PLO, or is it the other way around? But there might also be other possibilities, writes the newspaper, for example, a chase between Israeli hardliner organisations hunted by PLO hardliners or vice-versa. Such possibilities are reasonable.

This is still unclear, as unclear as where the prey and the hunters are because they have mingled with the thousands of people watching the jazz concert, forcing the Parisian police to return to their station empty-handed.

And then there is this news: George Benson is suing the French government, Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

I laugh heartily, turning my head to Otto. Unexpectedly, Otto also lets out a booming laugh. "Why are you laughing, Otto?" I ask him as I walk towards him. It turns out that my image, as well as that of the newspaper I was reading, have been captured by his disintegrator machine. The newspaper further explains that George Benson has a valid reason: his jazz concert was being auctioned off to Parisian millionaires, and the resulting money from the auction will be donated to his comrades, the Black Americans, whom he considered as an "annihilated generation" that must be immediately fixed or they will suffer. The concert ended before the auction could actually take place.

"Now we're going to test it again with the glowing pieces of coal," Otto says while aiming his machine at the embers. He presses the "Paris" button and *Le Monde*'s latest headline appears: "Menachem Begin rejects George Benson's demands, with the excuse of "complete ignorance", saying the lawsuit is "illogical".'' Meanwhile, Yasser Arafat also rejects the demands, reasoning that "we are all struggling together", and of course "We're sending our greetings as a token of our sympathy for George Benson's spirit of solidarity and integrity", saying that this is the ideal spirit of the era.

Meanwhile, another surprise happens on the part of the French government. President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing accepts the demands of the jazz musician, sending him a cheque of USD 20,000,000.

The French president also takes the opportunity to criticise the police, whom he judges as having no "jazz sensitivity".

"We will just have to wait for our afternoon paper. I think the scenes we've seen will be accurate," Otto preaches while opening a champagne bottle and pouring its contents into two glasses. Tinkle... we clink our glasses.

"Long live SMPVTU!" we shout simultaneously, rather unexpectedly. We sip the champagne contentedly.

Suddenly:

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cak cak cak
cak cak cak cak
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("Argh, such a hassle," Otto whines)
cak cak cak cak cak
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cak cak cak
cak cak
cak
a rumbling sound
fills the yards
surrounding the cottage
where we're staying

We're startled, and Otto runs to the front yard while I run to the back. Around 200 *cak* dancers are circling around our cottage, their hands trembling in the air:

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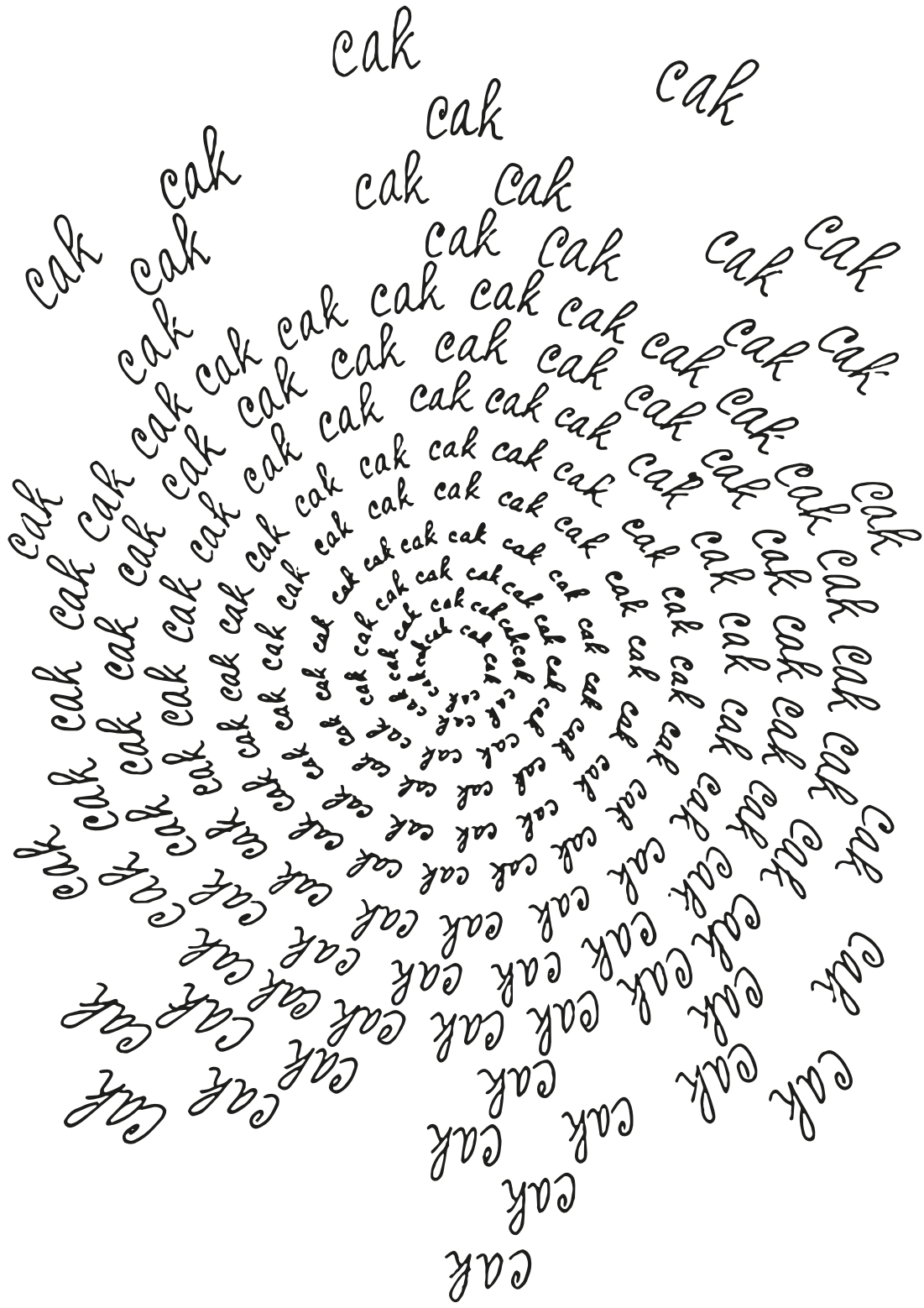
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PLO SELF—SACRIFICE RITUAL

PROVENANCE

The Indonesian version, "Puputan PLO", is published in:

- *Zaman*, No. 29, Year III (29 August–4 September 1982); and
- *Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon* [From Jerusalem to Armageddon], ed. Danarto dkk. (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2024).

The English version featured in this publication is translated by Danarto dkk. (Andri Setiawan).

EDITORS' NOTES

Unlike Danarto's other short stories, this one was not published with a timestamp. First published in the weekly magazine *Zaman,* it was not published in the short story rubric but in the column entitled "Titipan". The typography of "Titipan" was also created by Danarto.

This short story was written close to the events that occurred on 6 June 1982, when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) invaded southern Lebanon. This invasion led to war between the IDF and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which operated in the region. Through a refugee plan initiated by the United States of America's envoy Philip Habib, the PLO was forced to leave Lebanon in August.

TRANSLATION NOTES

Puputan

Puputan comes from the word *puput*, which in Balinese means fall out, broken off, all over or death. *Puputan* is an all-out war that leads to a mass sacrifice ritual. Some notable *puputan* occurred during the resistance of the Balinese kingdoms against Dutch invasion, such as Puputan Jagarana (1848–49), Puputan Badung (1906) and Puputan Klungkung (1908).

Over 8,000 Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) guerrillas performed their ablutions in preparation for prayer with the very limited water that was available. Then they headed to the ward.

This so-called ward is nothing more than an open-air piece of floor without walls, without a roof, surrounded by the ruins of buildings caused by the Israeli onslaught. They lined up for morning prayers.

Men, women, elders, teenagers, children and babies, none of whom said a single word. The imam was Jamil Hilal, the PLO spokesman, and the preacher was Yasser Arafat himself.

Silent. The air seemed to stop moving. Their prayer movements were crooked, as if they were almost dead.

Mountainous ruins seemed to be meticulously recording everything that had happened. Concrete iron bars sticking out here and there, as if they were testimonial antennas. Hanging like an umbrella, the cloud represents the certainty of fate.

That day, Saturday, 21 August 1982, the PLO Chairman's watch showed 4.45 am. Babies were not making any sounds. They weren't asleep though.

"Today marks the fulfilment of the promises we once made to each other," said Arafat, beginning his morning sermon.

"After a long wait, today has finally come, bringing with it an intensity of spirit no one ever expected. The 14 steps for evacuation, Khaddafi's plan, our Arab brothers, the multinational troops, the Iraq-Iran war, everything, yes, everything has actually played a big role in giving a variety of colours to our struggle."

"In all of our lives, my life and the lives of all of you, our vision has never shone as brightly as it does today. All these matters have become clear. Today it is clear what it means to be a member of the PLO. This last meeting of ours is a fateful one."

"Palestinians are not prepared to sacrifice other nations in order to preserve their own safety. Palestinians prefer to sacrifice themselves for the safety of other nations. Thousands of our Lebanese brothers died as a result of the Israeli invasion against us. The blood they spilled has filled our veins, so that we can decide what we must do today."

"Evacuation? There is no place for us to return to, except for Palestine," said Arafat as if muttering to himself. A few women sobbed.

"I do not accept suffering as an external factor. Palestinians do not believe in it. Even if it offers the freshest water when we are half-dead from thirst. We do not acknowledge that. Instead suffering has truly become one with our flesh and spirit."

"Like a gun and its bullets," said Arafat while holding and cradling a baby. Caressing the baby.

"Soon, all of us together, from elders to babies, will disappear from the face of the earth. But the Palestinian nation will stand strong, a civilised nation that is as important as all other nations. We will fight Israeli terror to the last drop of our blood."

Suddenly, Arafat saw a very clear vision in front of him, as clear as the scene of a play on a stage. Denpasar, Bali, 14 September 1906, from the gate of the palace of King Anak Agung Alit, hundreds of people lined up in neat rows.

Men in red-and-black clothes, women in colourful clothes, children in white clothes, headed for a death ritual. The fragrance of sandalwood wafted from their bodies.

All meaning became solid. Embers seemed to glow through the fingers that held them.

From the king, empress, duke, commander, priests to the common people, they were determined to carry out puputan, an all-out war, a kingdom against the Dutch colonialists.

The barrage of shots from the heavily armed enemies seemed to easily chew through their flesh, one by one, five, ten, fifty, one hundred...

They fell without a sound, like a banana tree falling at a single blow.

Those who were still alive continued to move forward while brandishing kerises (swords), stepping over the corpses of their father, mother, brothers, sisters, neighbours or children.

And endless bullets continuously greeted them.

The Puputan Badung recorded the deaths of 1,400 men, women and children. Then the king of Tabanan and his family, Dewa Agung, the king of Klungkung and his family, all followed the puputan.

"I can see it!", shouted Arafat in amazement. People were shocked. Everything seemed to be confirmed.

"Rise. Your soul is noble," he shouted again. The sun shone on him. The clouds parted.

The rubble gaped. The concrete wires were shaking. The collapsed buildings echoed that promise.

They moved. Cocking their guns. Facing the Israeli army.

Mothers cradled their babies while holding rifles, ready to fire. Teenage girls, however tense, were ready to sacrifice everything.

Sleepy-looking children clung to their mothers' or older sisters' skirts. The men spread out in a protective arc. In front, Arafat, Hilal, Iyad and other warlords were seen half-running.

When the American, French and Italian armies arrived, they found more than 10,000 fallen PLO fighters and sympathisers.

Among them, five American journalists, three French journalists, four Dutch journalists and several Middle Eastern journalists who had also participated.

Philip Habib was stunned to see the overlapping corpses. "This is a real puputan," he muttered.

The sun melted,
clouds melted,
buildings melted,
rubble melted,
guns melted.

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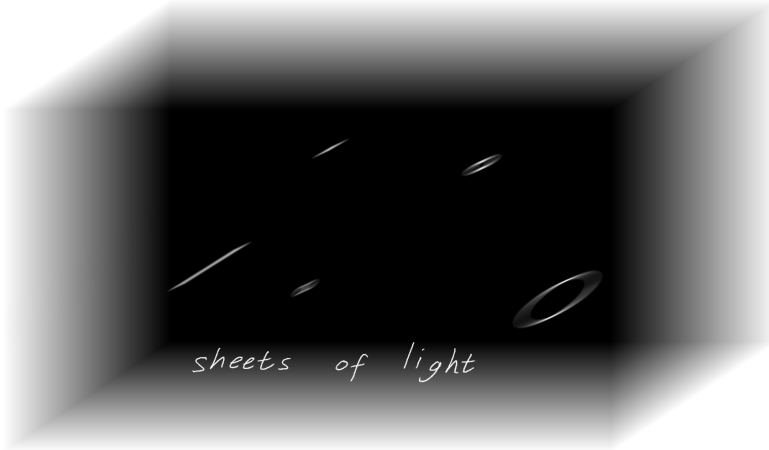

sheets of light

PROVENANCE

The Indonesian version, "Lempengan-lempengan cahaya", is published in:

- *Horison*, July 1988;
- *Setangkai Melati di Sayap Jibril* [A stalk of jasmine on Gabriel's wing] (Yogyakarta: Bentang Budaya, 2001);
- *Setangkai Melati di Sayap Jibril* [A stalk of jasmine on Gabriel's wing] (Yogyakarta: Diva Press, 2006); and
- *Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon* [From Jerusalem to Armageddon], ed. Danarto dkk. (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2024).

The English version featured in this publication is translated by Danarto dkk. (Ruhaeni Intan & Grace Samboh).

EDITORS' NOTES

Danarto finished writing this short story around seven to eight months after the uproar of Palestinians against the Israeli military. The resistance started in the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza, where boycotts and stone-throwing first ensued, and later spread to the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This incident then became known as the First Intifada.

In his diary, Danarto logged that he wrote this short story across five days, from 12 March to 16 March 1988. After finishing the story by handwriting, his wife, Dunuk, typed the short story to be sent to *Horison* magazine. The first publication of this short story in *Horison* no. 7 year XXIII was accompanied by several drawings which were made by Danarto himself, one of them became the cover of the edition. The making of these drawings were also logged in his diary, taking almost two months, between 19 March to 15 May 1988. On 13 July 1988, Danarto also noted that he visited the *Horison* office in Jakarta to pick up a copy of the magazine.

TRANSLATION NOTES

Lauhul Mahfuz

Lauhul Mahfuz (*Al-Lawh Al-Mahfuz*) means preserved or protected tablet. In Islam, *Lauhul Mahfuz* refers to a tablet that contains all the records of what has already happened, is happening and will happen in the universe.

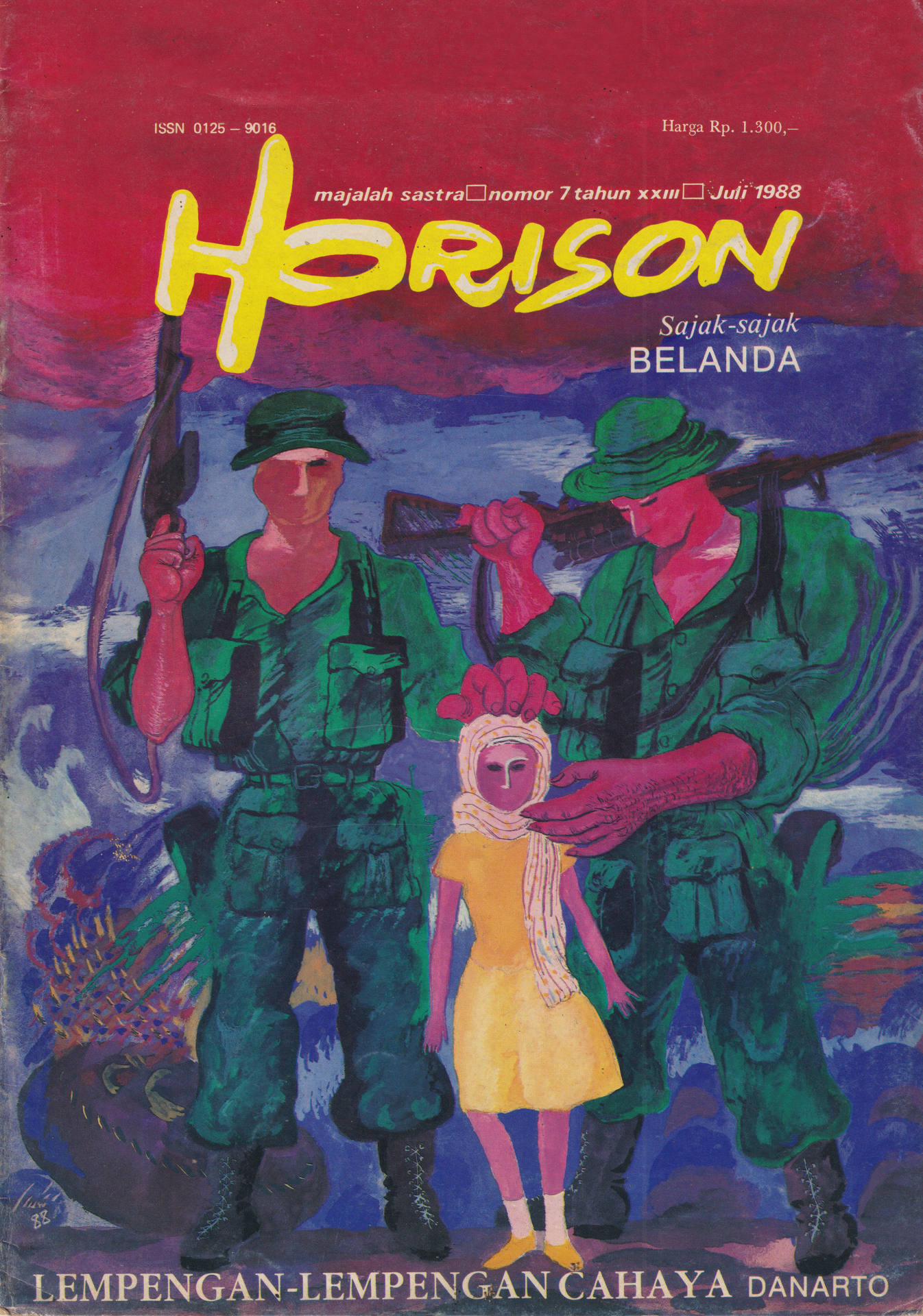
ISSN 0125 – 9016

Harga Rp. 1.300,–

majalah sastra □ nomor 7 tahun xxiii □ Juli 1988

HORISON

Sajak-sajak
BELANDA



LEMPENGAN-LEMPENGAN CAHAYA DANARTO

After Allah revealed the Surah Al-Fatihah, The Throne Verse and two verses (18 and 19) of Surah Ali Imran, they were placed above the Throne. The verses ask Allah: "Will You send us to Your earth, to those who oppose You?"

Allah answered: "Every one of My servants reads you after praying, for the sake of My glory and greatness. I created a paradise for them where they can live. I give you 70 reminders every day. I fulfill their 70 needs every day, the least of which is the forgiveness of sin. I protect them from every enemy and always help them."

In the form of sheets of light, the verses glide at a speed beyond any limit we can imagine. Full of joy, the sky, clouds, weather, brightness, darkness and smells, all look at the verses. The sky, a place where all substances are mixed together, seems to have acquired a new substance after being passed through these verses. The weather then released a certain colour as the verses passed by, a colour that did not mix with the colours that had already been brushed across the broad heavens. A bright, sparkling star appeared, whose speed the sky could not match. The verses were suddenly pushed into a corner, marked by a blast of silent light.

"I felt like I wasn't moving," said Al-Fatihah.

"Despite our incredible speed?" said The Throne Verse.

"Are we really to wander?" said Surah Ali Imran.

"I feel that whatever we pass through greets us with joy."

"It feels like joy is a big song."

"One that fills the sky."

Has there ever been weather like that, a mixture of atmosphere-colour-sound, which is real, which soothes the eyes, makes smells pleasant, every time My servant reads you after prayer, and is gentle on the ears, flows in the throat, flows gently through the nostrils, makes everything feel light?

Has there ever been weather like that, which is flat, has no dimensions, has no distance, far and near at the same time, makes all sides of objects visible, makes them all the same size, all the same sound, all of them float, transparent to the eye, in the thickness of colour?

Has there ever been weather like that, between sounds and dwellings, brightness that knows no shadows, colours continually changing, where the fog becomes a mattress, the dew becomes a rug, a floating landscape that anyone can stop at any time without stepping on anything or falling down?

"What are these shining sheets of light?" asked a splash of colour.

"We are holy verses," said Al-Fatihah, The Throne Verse, and Surah Ali Imran together.

"How happy you are," said a faint voice.

"Do we look happy?" asked the verses.

DANARTO

"You look much more than that," said the beam of light.

"'You sing," continued a fragrant smell.

"Do we sound like we're singing?"

"You guys seem more than that."

"Where are you from and where are you going?"

"We are from Lauhul Mahfuz, our destination is the earth."

"So you've been in seclusion all this time?"

"Yes. And so have many others."

"Then I remembered. There were times when flocks of holy verses fell down from unimaginable heights, towards the green earth, one after the other."

"When was that?"

"Long ago. Much too long ago. Long before this journey of yours began."

"It's nice to be assigned to the earth."

"Among God's dissidents?"

"Among God's dissidents."

"Among hostile hordes?"

"Among hostile hordes."

"On the edge of destruction?"

"On the edge of destruction."

Washes of colour paint the sky green
A faint voice conveys sounds
A beam of air creates our moods
A slight smell ushers in wandering
The verses fall down further, further and further
All the objects that fill the sky
Say goodbye
The solid, the fluid, find a way
To bring darkness to the light
Breathe fragrance throughout the landscape
Span the horizon

blue
yellow
green
purple
red
black

March in orderly and straight rows

"We, the stars, reveal many things. We cut through obstacles and open the way," shouted the group of stars as they watched the sacred verses glide by.

"Peace be with you," replied the verses.

"May peace abound," shouted the clouds.

"May harmony be protected," replied the verses.

"Are you guys heading to Earth?"

"We're heading to Earth."

"Green Earth."

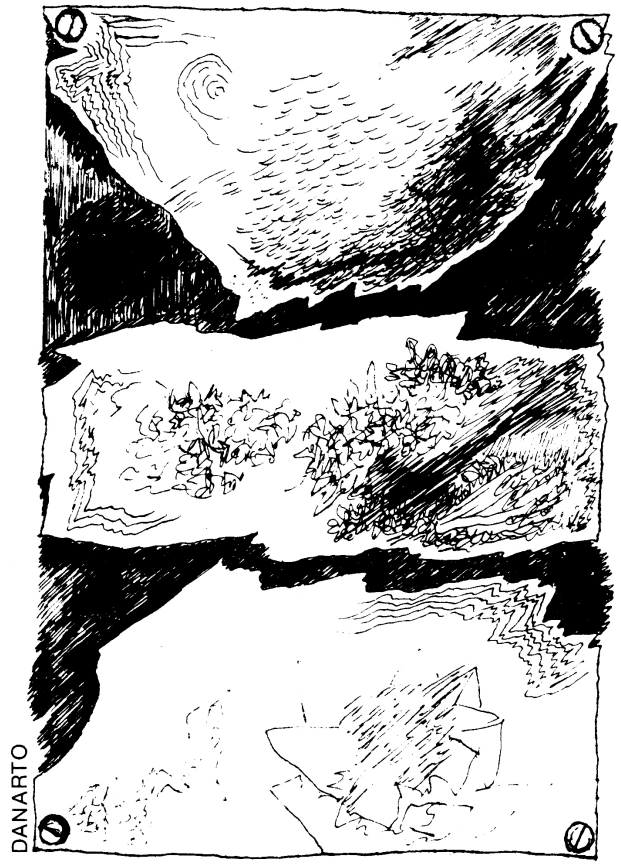
"Soaked in red."

"Prosperous earth."

"Gnawed by drought."

"Your final station."

"Before going to eternity."



The stars nodded together as a sign of joy. For a moment, harmony reached out, then returned to normal. The clouds travelled quickly, as if blown by the sky. The speeding light stalled for a moment, smiling at those who passed by. A tinge of colour sparkled, an angle of the sheets of light that flew hard, sequences of angles, in layers, reaching further than the eye could see.

The verses swept the atmosphere, no matter what they depicted. A peaceful atmosphere, a comfortable atmosphere, a serene atmosphere, the verses don't go into detail. Each time the verses passed, the verses called out, without a single voice being heard. Serenity like this possibly frightens humans, so every human movement is always accompanied by sounds, no matter how small or faint. Bodily objects, even though they are human, can apparently only associate with rough sounds. This is, of course, a kind of typical brotherhood, only the form is different.

When the holy verses entered the atmosphere, they made a roaring sound. Deserts and rocky mountains burned. Desert animals—various types of creeping and flying creatures—all collapsed. The oases suddenly dried up. Palm trees surrounding them charred into charcoal statues. Seeing this scene, the desert was sad. A bunch of clouds could not hold back its sobs and begged God:

"Oh, Allah, this terrible sight can't possibly last long. Nothing can bear to look at it."

"What exactly do you want to do?" God answered.

"Only Allah knows best," shouted the cloud.

"Okay," said Allah, "O cloud, suck up as much sea water as possible. Then spray the water all over this desert by saying My Name first."

A bunch of clouds darted towards the sea, as fast as lightning. From above they sucked in as much of the sea as they could. Like a huge pillar supporting the sky, the sea water sucked in by the clouds was white, firmly holding up the sky. And the clouds said, "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious Most Merciful", then sprayed the sea water all over the desert.

The desert received showers of rain with great joy. Everything returned to normal. The desert and the rocky mountains shone again. The animals came back to life. The oases spouted water again. And the date palms turned green again.

The Prophet Muhammad heard the roar soon after he had begun his prophetic journey. There was a clattering sound as well. The revelation was so powerful that his beads of sweat dropped as big as corn kernels, even on a cold night. All worship and praise are owed only to Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala, who created and maintains the entire universe.

When these verses became widely known throughout the continents and were repeatedly recited by hundreds of millions of people who prayed, the sheets of light continued to slide. They continued to wander. As if the obligations carried on their shoulders were never finished. An eternal task. These verses seem to want to be everlasting in their wanderings. With the speed of the blink of an eye for thousands of kilometres, the verses suddenly appeared in front of each person, in the recitation of the crowd, in the mosque, in the market, in the office, at the station, in the hotel, in the machine shop, in the rice fields, in the factories, in houses, in forests, on mountains, in lakes, in hiding places.

Each time these verses appear in front of individuals, or the crowd recites them, they seem to challenge each one of them, even though their sudden appearance is always accompanied by humility. That's how flabbergasted people are. Feeling that you are being stared at by a bunch of requirements, even though these verses never propose anything. Then people got busy. They became addicted to work, even though they used to be mediocre. People look like they are being promised something. And that promise will be fulfilled. People are heating up. Everyone becomes a hunter.

The wandering nature of these verses also reached Palestine. The verses knocked on the door of a Palestinian family's house. The knock sounded very soft compared to the series of gunshots and explosions that were destroying the nearby surrounding buildings. Who cares about knocks? All family members in the house may be lying on the floor, trying to avoid the whistling rain of bullets.

And hunters for the establishment of a Palestinian state draw their vigour from these verses. The hunters are fighting to obtain land for the Palestinian state, even though the land already exists. The land has been there for a long time, it's just that another flag is currently occupying it. Israel is not Israel if it is not Israel.

As is usual in other places, the verses then divide themselves, increase in number, then scatter. There are those who attach themselves to the remaining fragments of the walls of the buildings. Others stick to used tyres that were burned as roadblocks. They also attach themselves to steel hats, cloth hats, rifles and *kafiehs*. These verses can penetrate to the marrow of our bones. But there are those who use them for decoration. There are quite a few people who use them as talismans.

Riots can break out at any time throughout the neighbouring Arab-Jewish region, in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank or in Jerusalem. Political tensions were exploded by the uprising of young Palestinians. That tension was also felt in Bethlehem. The Israeli army went too far in suppressing the demonstration. A total of 36 Palestinians were shot, and more than a thousand others detained. As a result, Israel had to provide an emergency prison near Hebron, West Bank, and expand the existing one in the Gaza Strip.

PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, made a different statement at a press conference in Baghdad. According to Arafat, 62 Palestinians were killed, 500 injured, 1,700 detained. As he showed a number of documents, Arafat said that all the dead had been secretly buried by Israel.

If a little Palestinian girl aged seven held these verses, it would be difficult to know what they mean. If the girl were standing alone on the side of the road in the Gaza Strip, a dense settlement—one hectare is home to 1,500 people, one of the densest places in the world after Hong Kong—perhaps something would catch her attention. If two Israeli soldiers suddenly approached that little Palestinian girl, of course, there would be something interesting happening.

"What did you swallow, sweet little girl?" shouted one of the soldiers, holding the little girl's head.

"Nothing," replied the little girl.

"Nothing how?" another soldier chimed in while bending his head closer to the little girl's head.

"Nothing."

"You put something in your mouth."

"Yes," answered the little girl.

"What did you swallow?"

"Holy verses," answered that little girl.

"You swallowed holy verses?"

"Yes."

"What holy verse? Biblical holy verses?"

"No."

"What holy verse?"

"Holy verses from the Koran."

"What verses did you swallow?" The other soldier crouched and looked at the girl's face.

"What verses did you swallow, darling?"

That little girl looked down.

"Maybe she swallowed secret documents," said one soldier.

"A child like this?" answered one soldier.

"But this is a Palestinian child." Then the two soldiers whispered to each other while gripping the girl's arms.

"What's your name, sweet child?"

That little girl looked down.

"You don't have a name?"

"I do."

"What?"

"Fatimah."

"Well, Fatimah. You swallowed a secret document, right?"

"I swallowed Al-Fatihah, The Throne Verse and the Ali Imran verse," answered the little girl, looking down.

"Why did you swallow those verses?"

The girl was silent.

"Why did you swallow those verses?"

"I'm afraid of their being taken," answered the girl.

"Afraid of their being taken?" interrupted the soldier, "You mean you are afraid that we will take the verses from your hands?"

The girl looked down.

"Why would we take those verses?" said one.

"The soldiers used to take our holy verses," said the girl.

Suddenly the two Israeli soldiers laughed at the girl's words.

"Come with us. There's no need to be afraid," said one, pulling the girl's shoulder. The other followed her from behind. People passing by—Arabs and Jews alike—asked each other what had happened so that a little girl could be taken by soldiers. Arriving at the security post, the girl was confronted by the commander. They talked for a while. Then the girl was taken into the bathroom. The two soldiers asked the girl to vomit up what she had swallowed. At first it was very difficult for the girl. Finally, she was able to do it. The holy verses slid smoothly out of her stomach. After being washed clean, the verses were handed over to the commander. The girl sat in front of the commander's desk.

"These verses are sheets of light," muttered the commander as he examined the pieces of verse that looked very much like they were written on scraps of paper. The two soldiers also took some by holding the other piece. In Arabic letters, the verses appeared to glow.

"I wonder where this light comes from," muttered the commander as he gripped a sheet of verse, causing the light to gush out from between his fingers. Then he twirled them in his hand. The two soldiers imitated their commander's actions. They gripped the sheets and twirled them.

"So it's true, this girl did swallow these sheets?" asked the commander.

"That's right, Commander," answered the soldiers together.

"I don't believe this little girl could swallow these sheets. They're too hard," said the commander. "At first glance, the sheets look like paper. Then they look like plastic. Then, after looking at them closely, they look like the thin metal plate placed between the contents and lids of cans."

"Cans containing powdered drinks," continued the soldier.

"Yes, yes," said the commander.

"Milk powder or chocolate."

The commander stood up and ordered his soldiers: "Try to swallow it."

Hearing this, the two soldiers looked at each other.

"Try to swallow it," repeated the commander.

"I can't, Commander," answered the soldier hastily.

"Just try one. This girl can swallow three."

Hesitantly the soldier put the sheets into his mouth. Instantly he coughed, then vomited it out.

"You have to try too," the commander ordered the other soldier.

With disgust, the soldier swallowed another piece. He coughed, then vomited it up too. Now it was the commander's turn to try. He was curious. He quickly swallowed the sheet he had been gripping. It turned out that the commander too couldn't do it. He coughed and vomited the sheet back up.

The commander then took the sheets to the sink and washed them. He sat again behind his desk. He devoted all his attention to the sheets. He gripped them again. He twirled them again. Light burst forth from between his fingers. He left that little girl sitting in front of him frozen. And the two soldiers were still standing at his side of the table.

"Oh, sweet girl," said the commander, breaking the silence without looking at the girl. "Where did you get these pieces?"

"there are a lot? a lot on the streets," answered the girl.

"there are a lot? a lot on the streets," the commander muttered in imitation.

"Have you ever seen something like this while you were walking around?"

"Never, Commander," answered the two soldiers simultaneously.

"On the streets...where is that, sweet girl?" asked the commander.

"On walls, on house doors, on pillars, on burning car tyres," said the girl.

"Is this little girl speaking the truth?"

"No, Commander," said the two soldiers.

"The soldiers are used to taking our holy verses," said the girl, looking down.

"The soldiers are used to taking our holy verses," the commander muttered in imitation.

"Is what this girl said true?"

"No, Commander."

"Surely this little girl isn't just babbling," snapped the commander. "You should investigate whether your friends like picking up junk like this on the streets."

"Fatimah! Fatimah!" Suddenly there was a shout from outside.

"Mom! Mom!" said that little girl as she ran outside.

The commander and his two soldiers were stunned. When they ran after her into the yard, the girl was already in the arms of her mother, and a man was standing beside her. The mother was very angry with the three soldiers. She pointed unapologetically at the soldiers.

"You kidnapped my child!" shouted the mother.

"No, no," answered the commander. "We had a good chat."

Continuing to scream, the mother took her child away. Her husband watched behind her.

There was the sound of glass breaking apart. The commander and two of his soldiers were shocked. The window of the guard post was pelted with stones by a Palestinian youth.

"Catch that young man!" shouted the commander.

The two soldiers quickly chased the young man who was running very quickly. In the only place in the world where throwing stones can lead to a jail sentence of 20 years—the West Bank.

The commander came back in. He took the sheet into the bathroom. He put it on the edge of the tub of water. He deliberately didn't turn on the lights so the light from the sheet shone brightly, illuminating the bathroom. Suddenly the commander snatched it all up and put it in his mouth. But in a split second, he coughed until he vomited it back up.

Suddenly there was a sound of people running.

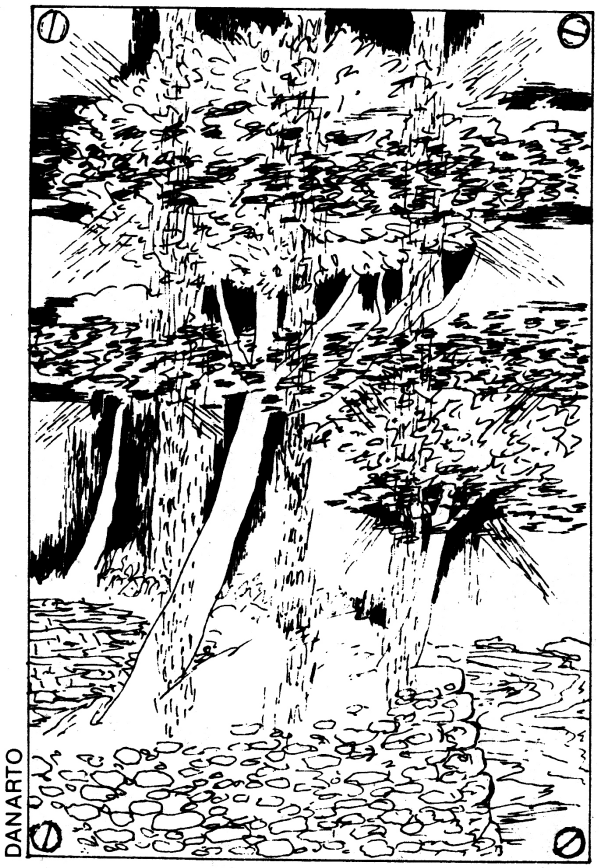
"Commander! Commander!" shouted the two soldiers who burst into the commander's room. "They're attacking us! They are attacking us!"

"Ask for help! Hurry!" the commander shouted, coming out of the bathroom while putting the sheet into his shirt pocket.

"Dozens, Commander, dozens!" screamed the soldier while shouting through the walkie-talkie.

The commander rushed out. Smoke billowed along the suddenly empty street. Car tyres and oil drums burned in the middle of the road. A stretch of concrete wire from a former building was stretched across the road.

The vehicles stuck on the road were abandoned by their owners. Shops and houses quickly closed their doors. Buzzing armoured vehicles arrived. Immediately, people fought each other and gunfire broke out. Dozens of young Palestinians pelted the soldiers with stones. The Israeli army responded with a line of fire and tear gas. Several people fell as they ran. They entered the narrow streets between the shops and houses.



At least three young Palestinians were killed in this clash. Their bodies were thrown onto trucks and rushed away as quickly as possible. The Israeli army has become increasingly careful in treating the bodies of young Palestinians, to avoid effective propaganda from the funeral being used to support the Palestinian struggle.

Israeli police always try to prevent funerals becoming campaigns for the Palestinian struggle. As soon as a Palestinian fighter is shot dead, the police immediately secures the body and say they will carry out an autopsy. Then the police forces the victim's family to bury the body as soon as night falls. Only the family may attend the funeral.

The Palestinian fighters are quite skilled at detecting this tactic. When Mussa Hanafi, a student at Birzeit University, in the Palestinian West Bank, was shot dead by police during a demonstration, Palestinian fighters immediately heard about it. As soon as the body was secured by the police, the Birzeit students managed to steal Hanafi's body from the hospital. The body was immediately hidden in a resident's house. Towards morning, Hanafi's body was finally buried in a large ceremony. No less than 5,000 Palestinian fighters took part in the procession, and the body was carried in a coffin wrapped in Palestinian flags.

The road is quiet. Only the sound of fire crackling from drums and burning tyres could be heard. Israeli police and soldiers occupy the streets. One or two people tried to dismantle the roadblocks. The commander and his two subordinate soldiers tilted their heads and gazed at the flames. The three of them saw a bright light among the flames. The commander then took a pole and poked at the bright light. He took the sheet. He wrapped it in his handkerchief, then put it in his pocket. The two soldiers found the scattered sheets not far from the flames, then handed them over to their commander.

It turns out that other soldiers were also doing the same thing. Some were squatting as they dug around. Another one was bent over picking up something. Someone was crawling along the wall, with his hands groping between the bricks.

"If anyone finds sheets of holy verses, hand them over to me," shouted the commander. The soldiers and police turned indifferently towards the commander. The commander was not happy. He mumbled incoherently. Suddenly the commander approached a soldier.

"You put something in your pocket," the commander snapped.

"No, Commander," the soldier answered.

"I saw you put something in your pocket!" the commander snapped.

"I didn't put anything in!" the soldier interjected as he walked away.

The commander didn't like what he had just seen. He grabbed the soldier's shoulders and probed his pockets. The soldier couldn't stand it and he shook off the commander's hand. The commander felt insulted and clenched his fists.

"Enough, Commander!" shouted someone in civilian clothes standing behind the commander as he clutched the soldier's chest. The commander hesitated, then let the soldier go. The commander stared at the man in civilian clothes for a moment, then turned away. Perhaps the commander realised that he was dealing with an undercover officer.

The commander and his two soldiers took shelter under a tree on the side of the road which the troops had just begun to guard. He counted the number of sheets he got without giving a fuck about the two subordinate soldiers who were observing him. As he was being swayed by the wind, he felt sleepy, somewhere between consciousness and unconsciousness, and he saw something in a row of trees a little way off.

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"Look! That is a tree of light, isn't it!" shouted the commander, pointing towards a tree in a row of trees some distance away.

Two of his soldiers stood up to follow the direction to which the commander was pointing. The three of them rushed there. There was a tree with bright leaves, the light overcoming the hot sun.

"What kind of land is this! The more one fights, the more miracles take place!" the commander shouted as he continued to rush.

When he reached the shining tree trunk, the commander looked up. He was observing something, with his hands on his hips.

"Oh my! That cute little girl again!" shouted the commander beaming.

The sweet little girl, Fatimah, seemed to be sleeping on one of the branches. Her clothes were shining, completely covered with sheets of the verse. This all made the tree seem to be crowned with light, surpassing the brilliance of the sun's rays.

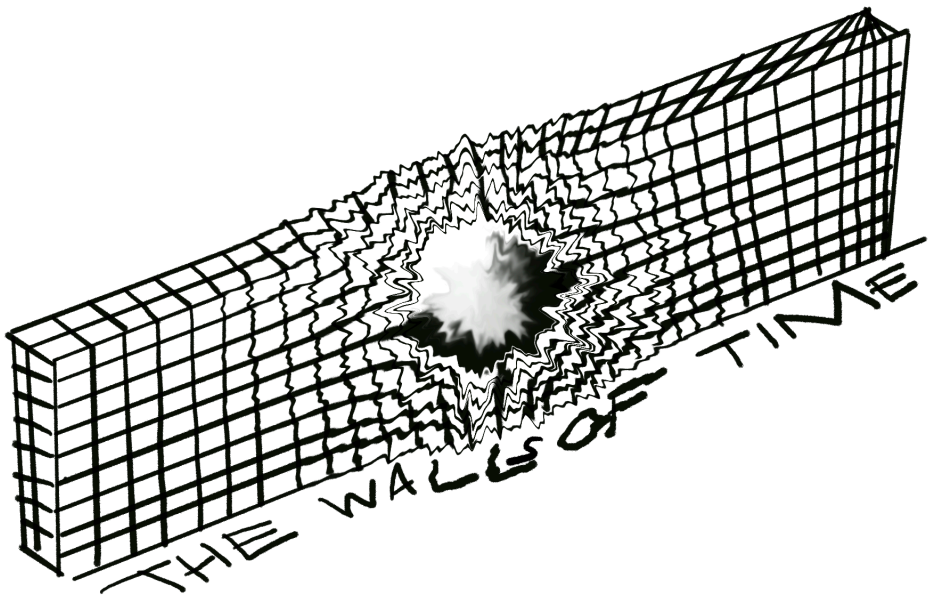
"Wake up, sweet little girl!" the commander shouted, laughing.

Fatimah woke up, shocked, then quickly climbed down the tree trunk. When she reached the base, the two soldiers caught her. The little girl struggled. She kicked the two soldiers. But before she could scream any louder, the two soldiers grabbed her more tightly. They silenced the little girl's screams with the palms of their hands.

Hopefully what happened with soldier Saguy Harpaz will not happen again. The sergeant from the Israeli paratroopers beat and kicked two Palestinians for no less than forty minutes. At the climax, Harpaz picked up a large rock and systematically crushed the Palestinians' arms—both tied together—after first breaking their fingers.

And the commander laughed while taking the sheets of light that were attached to Fatimah's clothes.

July 1988


THE WALLS OF TIME

PROVENANCE

The Indonesian version, "Dinding waktu", is published in:

- *Kompas*, 21 January 1990;
- *Gergasi* [Gluttonous giant] (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1996);
- *Gergasi* [Gluttonous giant] (Yogyakarta: DIVA Press, 2016); and
- *Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon* [From Jerusalem to Armageddon], ed. Danarto dkk. (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2024).

The English version featured in this publication is a translation by Danarto dkk. (Ruhaeni Intan & Grace Samboh).

EDITORS' NOTES

The story is set in the midst of a thousand-year-long war that has become tradition and spectacle. Danarto highlighted the huge loss of lives caused by this tradition, which prompted a mother to turn into stone. Danarto finished writing this short story in Jakarta on 16 December 1989. By that time, the First Intifada in Palestine had been going on for two years and had killed many innocent people. Two hundred and eighty-five Palestinians were killed by the Israeli military in 1989—this was the second highest number recorded during the First Intifada that happened between 1987 and 1993.

It was during this thousand-year war that I came across a huge rock at the centre of the battlefield. I, a fossilised, decrepit old man with all the energy left in me after 1,350 years of living, have taken refuge behind that rock to avoid gunfire, blazes and bomb blasts. I am neither a soldier nor a journalist, but a mere spectator. A spectator of wars. Yes, I have been a fanatical war spectator throughout the ages. Ever since centuries ago when cruelty was still the core of a beautiful football match, this war has, in the course of time, orchestrated by the skillful machinery of civilization, given birth to a tradition of cruel and brutal spectatorship.

Millions of soldiers' corpses pile up and the battlefield is now a highland. Wreckage of war machines has turned into mountains. Bomb explosions formed valleys and lakes. And planes that have crashed into the earth, hundreds of thousands of them, created sculptural hills of various shapes. And this pair of restless eyes, sacredly relish the spectacle, the entire arena, the battlefield, which is becoming endlessly bloodthirsty. Through these eyes, the mind records all the emotions following this long tradition of war; it runs in the nerves of the ages. Leading every nation to extend time, to extend space.

As spectators, we have a unique tradition. We do not champion one or the other of the two armies—a number of armies fight at the same time—we champion ourselves. Whichever one of us survives the battlefield in an allotted time, wins prizes in the form of money, companies, people, animals or whatever else is being fought over. The audience is made up of people from all walks of life. Most are millionaires. Among them are merchants, businessmen, conglomerates, princes, kings and even some queens. If there were no war, we spectators would organise one, pay for it and end it. Tragedy and happiness are just made up anyway.

Battles rage all day and all night. One or two spectators, my opponents—among them a conglomerate—crawl in the mud and take cover beside me. A number of journalists with their mud-covered video-cams and cameras reach for the stone wall, taking cover on the other side. The sky is full of bullets, the earth collapses as bombs explode. How beautiful the cruelty, how delicious the destruction. Every once in a while, thunder would signal the existence of a supreme power, roaring in the sky, marrying the thrummings of war. Behind this rock, we huddle together in the mud, tightly clenching our jaws to absorb sounds of the war's voluptuous symphony.

"Have you seen enough?" A voice suddenly rang out. We were startled. We look at each other and around for the source of the voice. But there was no one, except for us, petrified.

"No, not yet! Not before we watch it for thousands of years," I reply casually as I look up, just in case the source of the voice is above me.

"This is the voice of the rock that's protecting you." Upon hearing this, we get into a quarrel. Those war reporters with quick instincts—always ready whether awake or asleep—jump to the front to distance themselves from the rock. They were stunned by the talking rock. They quickly turn their video-cams on, panning towards the boulder.

"Hello! This is your war reporter on the frontline!" a reporter begins to speak in front of her colleague's video camera, directly transmitting to the headquarters and broadcasting live to the entire country.

"Yes, hello! This is your determined war witness!" another war reporter starts getting to work.

"Hey! Don't forget, the battle is still raging! Here's news about the rock. Your war reporter is ready to interview it," chirps another reporter as he points his mic towards the huge rock in front of him.

"Who are you and why are you here?" Reporters and their cameras scramble towards the rock to catch it on the record.

"I'm actually a mother..." the rock replies.

"A mother made of rock?" interrupts a reporter. The cameras go into a frenzy, busy looking for the best position for their shots.

"I am a mother of seventy children. Fifty boys and twenty girls. All of them have perished in this thousand-year war. The boys died one by one as warriors. The girls died as nurses, one by one at the frontline."

Explosions after explosions blast, surrounding the interview. Mud splatters everywhere, hitting the reporters' bodies and their cameras. The headquarters immediately warns its reporters to keep their cameras and microphones away from mud spraying in the air. A few of us spectators are stunned to witness the most amazing entertainment in the long history of war spectacles.

"How did your decision to turn into a rock come about?"

"Despair and suffering came hand in hand, endlessly. I could not possibly bear the agony of losing dozens of my children. At the height of my grief and tears, I made a wish to become a rock. So I turned into a rock."

"Do you feel better now?"

"It feels like I'm getting better."

"How bizarre. The war is a farce, so our suffering shouldn't have gone any further. Why is there still misery all around us?"

"I thought so too. A mother could accompany her children to lay face down in the mud and never wake up, such wretchedness really exists. Just by turning into a rock, I've frozen into everything I've ever known. No weapon can despair me now. The atmosphere, space, time have gone away. Everything is non-existent."

The journalists are stunned. Then shriek:

"Mother, turn us into stones."

"So be it!" exclaims mother rock.

Suddenly the journalists turn into rocks, cold and silent. Seeing this, we, the spectators, begin to fight each other. We scramble to dodge the rocks, annoyed.

"This is foul play, mother rock!" shouts one of the spectators.

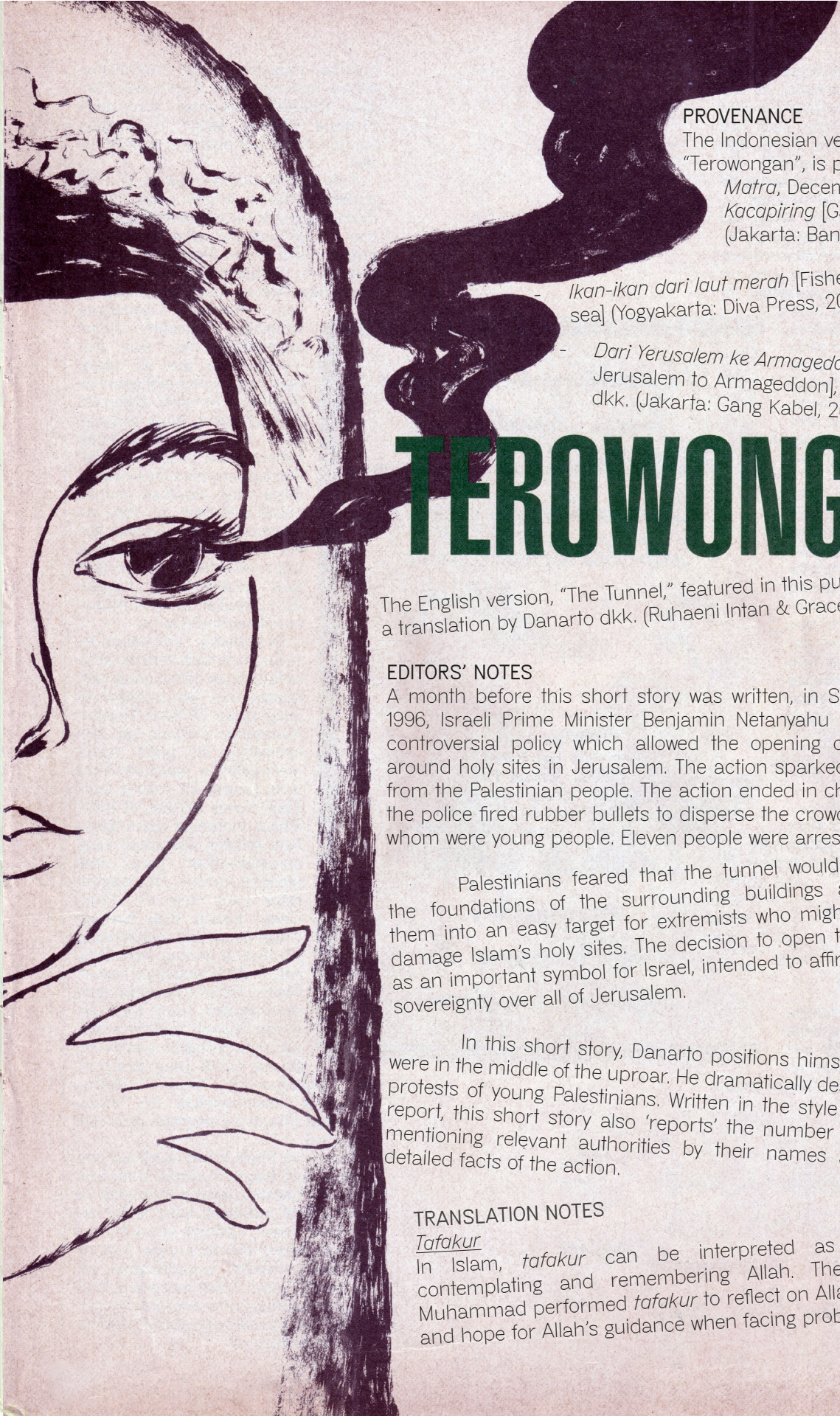
"She should be given a red card!"

"She's a dangerous spectator. She destroyed her body to ease her way into eternity, to become the eternal victor," shouts another.

We keep running and dodging the stones, amongst the roaring thunder and thrummings of war.

Jakarta, Saturday, 16 December 1989

DAN 96



PROVENANCE

The Indonesian version, "Terowongan", is published in:

- *Matra*, December 1996;
- *Kacapiring* [Gardenia] (Jakarta: Banana, 2008);
- *Ikan-ikan dari laut merah* [Fishes of the red sea] (Yogyakarta: Diva Press, 2016); and
- *Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon* [From Jerusalem to Armageddon], ed. Danarto dkk. (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2024).

TEROWONGAN

The English version, "The Tunnel," featured in this publication is a translation by Danarto dkk. (Ruhaeni Intan & Grace Samboh).

EDITORS' NOTES

A month before this short story was written, in September 1996, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu passed a controversial policy which allowed the opening of tunnels around holy sites in Jerusalem. The action sparked protests from the Palestinian people. The action ended in chaos after the police fired rubber bullets to disperse the crowd, most of whom were young people. Eleven people were arrested.

Palestinians feared that the tunnel would damage the foundations of the surrounding buildings and turn them into an easy target for extremists who might want to damage Islam's holy sites. The decision to open the tunnel as an important symbol for Israel, intended to affirm Israel's sovereignty over all of Jerusalem.

In this short story, Danarto positions himself as if he were in the middle of the uproar. He dramatically describes the protests of young Palestinians. Written in the style of a news report, this short story also 'reports' the number of victims, mentioning relevant authorities by their names and other detailed facts of the action.

TRANSLATION NOTES

Tafakur

In Islam, *tafakur* can be interpreted as thinking, contemplating and remembering Allah. The Prophet Muhammad performed *tafakur* to reflect on Allah's power and hope for Allah's guidance when facing problems.

The little Palestinian girl lay covered with blood. People's screams ranged from anger to despair. Mothers shrieked. Ferocious bullets. Violent soldiers. A blazing day. The little girl was quickly rushed to a nearby hospital, as shooting between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers continued. A number of Palestinian youths collapsed and those who survived lay on the street or took cover behind garbage bins, trees and kiosk walls. The Israeli soldiers, armed to the teeth, made easy targets of the Palestinian youths, as if this were merely a part of their daily training. Stale air. Dark eyes. Blind fate. The Palestinian youths with a high spirit of martyrdom, armed only with stones, attacked and defended themselves until the bitter end.

Ever since the tunnel at the side of Aqsa Mosque was opened on Monday, 23 September 1996 by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, open warfare has continued to rage between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers. Since that time, the smile of Yasser Arafat, President of the Republic of Palestine—which he usually shows when shaking hands—has not been seen again. Tensions rose every day. Palestinians took to the streets to protest against the Israeli prime minister's behaviour. Backs full of fat. Broken mirrors. Winding roads. The opening of the tunnel in itself desecrates the Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site for Muslims after the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque. A vengeful pen. Attitude without subtlety. Challenging the war.

The following day, on Tuesday, 24 September, Israeli soldiers on combat alert detained 11 Palestinian youths armed with stones and bottles of fuel ready to fight back. In Gaza City, President Yasser Arafat called Israel's actions "a massive crime against our holy places and religion". A nightmare incarnating an owl. Shredding rats. Remnants of civilisation. The crumbling wall. Buried spectators. A riotous match. A moment of silence. The grave that was exhumed. Who led the prime minister to the last page? A sudden downpour of rain has erased all maps, the Arab League called on America, Russia and Europe to intervene in the crisis. The Palestinian Authority, formed in 1994, called for strikes and demonstrations against the Israeli government's decision.

On Wednesday, 25 September, clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli soldiers broke out in Ramallah. Five Palestinians were killed and three hundred injured. Gunfire erupted between Palestinian soldiers and Israeli soldiers. Thousands of protesters invaded the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Israeli army, which was not expecting this show of force, was overwhelmed. Moreover, Hamas called for the Intifada to be revived. Seeing these signs, Netanyahu, who had just met with President Chirac, stated that the riots were not genuine. The Palestinian Authority responded to the Israeli prime minister's statement by stopping all forms of negotiation with Israel.

The following day, Thursday, 26 September, approximately 40 Palestinians were killed in shootouts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Cities burned. Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, Eres, Gaza, Kfar Darom, Rafah, revived memories of the Intifada. Israeli helicopters fired from above and dropped tear gas. All that's been built are torn right back down. Words shrink. Eyes glaze over. Innocent children were oblivious, but their bodies were suddenly bleeding. Who was taken away in the ambulance? Neighbours contacted each other. Is he your son? No, he isn't. Probably the son of the owner of that kiosk. Or the souvenir shop. Wait a minute. The Israeli army lost 11 soldiers.

At the Temptation Restaurant in Jericho, tourists are torn between wanting to continue their journey and hiding at the inn. At the Victoria Hotel in Jerusalem, the waiter did not provide water to wash down the food. The tourists protest. At Jesus Christ's birthplace in Bethlehem, the cries of a newborn caused tourists to scream hysterically. In the *tafakur* room of the Prophets at Umar Mosque, the Dome of the Rock, a fragrance spread as if the room was showered with perfume. The footprints of the Prophet Muhammad in the Hebron Mosque glow, dazzling the eyes of pilgrims. History more or less simultaneously sharpens the picture. Narrowing space for movement. People who are getting smaller and smaller, are catapulted into the air. Tracing the deserts of the prophets and apostles.

If it is true that Sheikh Yusuf Qardhawi issued a fatwa that Muslims should not go to Palestine because going there means supplying money to the Israeli government, it seems that the fatwa is detrimental to the Palestinian people who make a living from tourism. It is also detrimental to the government of Yasser Arafat and the Hamas group, which need to receive international attention from fellow travellers.

In a nearby hospital owned by Israeli soldiers, the little Palestinian girl lay on a mat, unconscious. Her carers were driven away. When they resisted, they were arrested. The Israeli doctors quickly came to her aid. They were busy looking for wounds on the little girl because her whole body was covered in blood. Her small slender body looked as if it had been blown up by a mine, or a grenade, or a missile. Her chest was as red as a blooming rose. Both of her shoulders seemed as if she was wearing the generals' stars. Yet not a single wound was found. The doctors were stunned. Where was the wound? After all, how could the girl survive while her body was bathed in blood. Nobody knows. The hunt for the wound had upset and confused them.

The blood on the little girl's body was indeed her own blood. But where did the blood come from, when her body was intact without a single scratch? "Leave her!" said one of the doctors as he himself left the girl, lying still. Suddenly one of them shouted, "This is the source." Then the doctors rushed back to the little girl. It turned out that the blood poured out from the corners of her eyes. Again the doctors were astonished. They couldn't believe it. From the corners of the girl's eyes gushed streams of blood. Fresh blood. Droplets of blood hit the floor like a stream of tap water. The doctors looked into the past. The library had no answer. Paragnos was silent.

A doctor shouted for the nurse to set up empty plastic blood transfusion tubes to collect the little girl's flowing blood. Another one gave her an injection to stop the uncontrollable flow of blood. Another doctor covered the little girl's eyes with bandages. But it was all in vain. The blood kept flowing, unbearably fast. Then the two newly arrived doctors lifted up the unconscious little girl to stop the flow of blood. But the blood seemed to gush even more from her tiny eyes.

Suddenly, as if a window of thought had been opened, the doctors were reminded of a few other little girls in the world who had unique biological symptoms in their bodies. For example, there are little girls whose eyes ooze long threads. And there are other little girls whose eyes ooze hard crystals. There are also little girls whose eyes secrete live insects so that the insects can line up or fly in all directions. The medical world is completely unfamiliar with and ignorant about all these symptoms. Not a single expert has been able to uncover this veil of darkness. It seems that centuries of change have left long shadows. And these shadows are darker than the night.

In Palestine, everyone is a fighter. It doesn't matter whether you are just an infant or still in kindergarten. In a family that includes a Palestinian soldier and a member of Hamas, everyone lives in harmony. They can each share their joy without having to feel unfair. They choose to fight in their own way. Palestine is unique. A historical homeland. Palestine is a destination for all wanderers. All forms of the manifestation of goodwill, even though they differ in vision, ideals and independence, fuse together in the land of the ancestors of one religion. Your religion, the one religion. That's what God says. Palestine is a symptom of the unification of the world's spiritual forces. In one village, Armageddon, nations meet to fight together until peace and freedom are achieved.

As if reminded of the hills and uphill roads, columns of Israeli soldiers surrounded the hospital, rifles at the ready. In front of the hospital, thousands of Palestinian protesters cheered and shouted, demanding the return of their little girl. The government said that the little girl was safe. She had not recovered from her injuries. If she were to be forcibly taken out of the hospital, it would endanger her life. So they asked the protesters to be patient and wait. Until when?

The guard was reinforced with armoured vehicles, tanks and helicopters. But this did not deter the protesters who camped in front of the hospital for several days. Every day the protesters sent representatives to see how their little girl was doing, but the Israeli government refused to allow them into the building. Posters were put up. "Israel kidnapped our little girl." "Netanyahu has no heart." "Israel is a butcher."

President Yasser Arafat's government is the most absurd government in the world. How could it coexist peacefully with an enemy that colonised its homeland? Like a prophet, Yasser Arafat tried to capture the message of Allah the Almighty to repay evil with good, so that the enemy might become like a brother. Subhanallah. Arafat's difficulty was as difficult as creating the substance of acid. Let a thousand puffs be released; all that comes out of the mouth is charcoal acid. Not every act of kindness produces goodness, the contradictory substance sleeps peacefully in the human heart. The history written by man and witnessed by God is the history that God does not want. Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, mysticism and any other faith is the fate of man.

Long ago, Jewish settlers who had been wandering for a long, long time, stopped in the land of Palestine. A kind Palestinian allowed the Jews to stay as guests. Over time, the Jews built villages, schools, offices and other basic necessities. When the situation escalated, the kind Palestinian was politically assassinated and a long, protracted history of hostility between Palestine and Israel ensued.

Contemporary desires took on a distinctive form when Netanyahu wanted to become the Father of the Jewish Nation by seizing the Aqsa Mosque and turning it into a synagogue. He also impeded the birth of the Palestinian state. He wanted to become prime minister for life. For him this is the most opportune moment, there will never come a

better moment. History must be born, he exclaimed. He felt he was at the top of Mount Sinai waving the hexagon-star flag while gazing down at the Palestinian city that twinkled beautifully at the toe of his boot. If the 488-metre-long tunnel managed to attract 500,000 tourists a year, then it would be strong enough to create vibrations that could bring down the Aqsa Mosque.

Clashes were inevitable between Israeli soldiers and the thousands of Palestinian protesters who wanted to storm the hospital to retrieve the little girl. Dozens of people rushed at the tanks and panzers and set them on fire. Helicopters roared above, unleashing an onslaught of gunfire that left hundreds of people starving. The Israeli soldiers who had cordoned off the entire neighbourhood could no longer hold out. They were swallowed up by the mass of protesters who rushed in regardless of the Israeli soldiers' indiscriminate gunfire. The wounded soldiers were dragged to the hospital, hundreds of them. Thousands of people were starving on both sides.

When the day is bearable, both sides rest up for the uncertain times ahead. Protesters set up makeshift tents to treat hundreds of their seriously injured brethren. A day of pain. Lost hope. Dried ink. Collapsed buildings. The fire that raged. Israel's Minister of Defence, Yitzak Mordechai, looked tired, rundown and injured. He finally asked five leaders of the protests to enter the hospital to see their little girl. With halting steps, the five Palestinians were ushered in by a military official. The waiting room and the rest of the empty space was filled with hundreds of severely injured Israeli soldiers, lying on their backs with tubes of blood from operating theatres attached to their bodies.

When the five Palestinians arrived at the operating theatre, they rushed towards the little girl's bed. All five solemnly look at her with tears in their eyes, they kiss her one by one. The little girl is lying peacefully on the bed, eyes still bleeding, for the hundreds of severely wounded Israeli soldiers scattered all over the place. Mordechai also approached, teary-eyed, to kiss the little girl.

Tangerang, 31 October 1996

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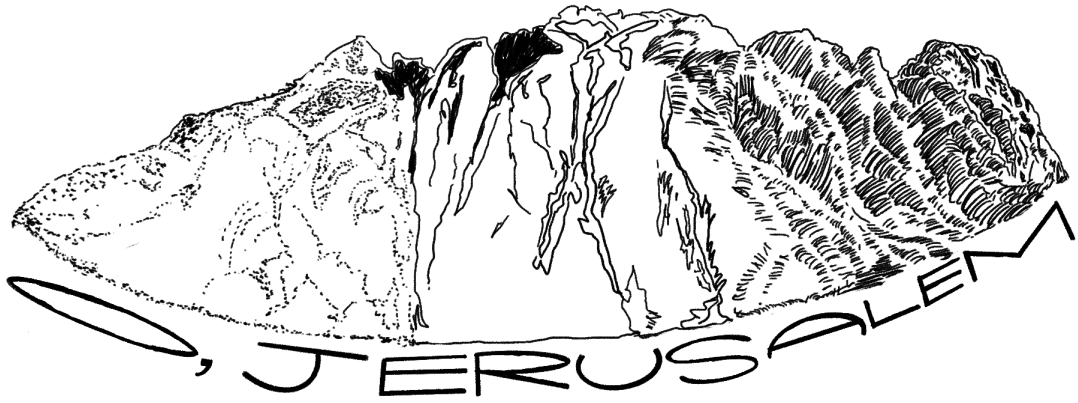
O, JERUSALEM

PROVENANCE

The Indonesian version, "O, Yerusalem", is published in:

- *Republika*, 25 February 2007, under the title "Gadis kecil melintas di Yerusalem" [Little girl passing by Jerusalem];
- *Kacapiring* [Gardenia] (Jakarta: Banana, 2008);
- *Ikan-ikan dari laut merah* [Fishes of the red sea] (Yogyakarta: Diva Press, 2016); and
- *Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon* [From Jerusalem to Armageddon], ed. Danarto dkk. (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2024).

The English version featured in this publication is a translation by Danarto dkk. (Ruhaeni Intan & Grace Samboh).

EDITORS' NOTES

Danarto wrote this short story for nine hours in an internet cafe. When it was published in *Republika*, he wrote in his diary that he was disappointed, because the editor had cut some parts of the story. In 1994 and 1995, Danarto went on the Umrah pilgrimage. For the second trip, he also visited Jordan, Egypt and Palestine (Jericho, Hebron and Jerusalem). His pilgrimage travelogue, *Orang Jawa naik haji* [Javanese on Hajj pilgrimage] (Jakarta: Grafitipers, 1984) was republished with the addition of his Umrah experience by Dian Rakyat, a Jakarta-based publisher, in 1999 under the title *Orang Jawa Naik Haji + Umrah* [Javanese on Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage].

A patch of holy land. War on a quiet road. Homesick for the deserted village.This is our land, whatever will be. As far as the eye can see, dark mists are consumed by fire. Memories of a mother who left abruptly. A father saying goodbye, heading towards his death. The tall Tower of Babel divides. Whatever they're saying, we cannot comprehend. The heavy burden of carrying a promise. Each and every morning peace is uncertain.

A patch of holy land. Struggles on a lonely road. Longing for a village that has been deserted. This is our land, whatever will be. As far as the eye can see, dim mists are engulfed in flames. Memories about a mother who left suddenly. A father who said goodbye to death. The high dividing wall of the Tower of Babel. Whatever they're talking about, we do not understand. The weight of the burden carries a promise. Each and every morning, peace remains uncertain.

The ongoing battle still roars. It stopped five hours ago. Israeli troops pushed back on the remaining Palestinian fighters. Among the rubble of houses and shops—as seen from live television broadcasts—Palestinian fighters popped up and slipped away. A barrage of Israeli army fire billowed through chunks of wall. We are trapped in the Church of the Nativity, Jerusalem, the birthplace of the Apostle Jesus Christ. After Umrah, 15 of us travelled to Palestine by bus. We stopped and stayed in Amman, the capital of Jordan, bathing in the Dead Sea. We were transported by bus to Palestine with other tourists, mostly foreigners like us.

After a gruelling five-hour inspection by Israeli government officials, most of them fairly young, we were able to enter Palestine. We arrived in Jericho, a small sleepy town. A young Palestinian man carrying a long-barrelled rifle passed by. We did the afternoon prayers in a mosque that seems to have been funded by tourist agents. It was quiet. The town is at the bottom of a valley, about 400 metres above sea level. We then had lunch at the overpriced Temptations Restaurant. After we'd had our fill, we checked into the quaint-looking Victoria Hotel. When I mentioned that the architecture of this hotel indicates a high presence of ghosts, Mrs Betty, Nina and Poppy got scared. I went on to say that there's actually no place that doesn't have ghosts. Doctor Iqbal's family became even more scared.

Speaking of spectres, these spirits are just like us humans. With their families, they could either be happy or sad. They could have fears and responsibilities.

O, how beautiful Palestine is. At night, we, who were high above the ground, looked down, just as if we were in Puncak looking at Jakarta. Twinkling lights decorated the entire valley. Our group leader, Kiai Umar Budihargo, looked teary-eyed, his tears reflecting the flash of Fajri's camera as he took pictures. It was a dark night, but we insisted on aiming for the flickering scenery in the valley that would hopefully be captured by our cameras. The 'three maidens'—Ms Hashimah, Ms Fathonah and Ms Hindun—were too shy to get in front of the camera, despite Nurruhman and Ahim's persuasion. I recorded Mr Miftah Toha, Mrs Wiwiek and Kevin with their video-cams, also Doctor Iqbal, Mrs Betty, Nina and Poppy.

The Palestinian issue is our issue. How is it possible that in this third millennium, colonisation still takes place? Many are pessimistic that the Palestinians can ever gain their independence and proclaim a sovereign Palestinian Republic. Because, if the Republic of Palestine is proclaimed, this nation will be free to shop for weapons. Free to shop for weapons and no one to stop them, this is what Israel fears. An all-out battle against Israel is believed to lead to World War III. There is a village in Palestine, called Armageddon. It is in this village that all world powers gather to organise World War III.

The dawn call to prayer drove us to the Aqsa Mosque. The cold air made us shiver. At that time the Fajr prayer congregation was extremely small. If only I could sip some coffee and eat some meatball soup, after praying, oh, how delicious would it be. Local worshippers were dressed in thick jackets and huddled together. We had time to take pictures with the mosque's caretaker in front of the *mihrab* of the Grand Mosque or the Nabawi Mosque. Something we wouldn't bother doing at the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta.

The Israeli government is always trying to demolish the Aqsa Mosque by any means available. All trickery. They want to build a Temple of Solomon to replace it. Constantly throughout the centuries.

Uncivilised. They are still living in the age of disaster. There are always reasons for them to damage the holy mosque, which is the third member of the group that includes the Masjidil Haram (Grand Mosque) and Masjid Nabawi (Prophet's Mosque). The Israeli government's insistence on destroying the Aqsa Mosque constantly triggers the Palestinian fighters to fight to the bitter end. It seems that peace will never be achieved as long as the Israelis do not recognise the rights of the Palestinians.

The battle continues. Like rice pounding against a mortar. Continuously and relentlessly pounding. A gaping wound, the wound of a great nation. The map has been confused. Peace, no, peace, no nothing, nothing in a heartbeat. Hard soil, hilly lands, banana plantations, soldiers' tents, all swallowed by the gloomy air. Hope in the hands of a wilderness.

After lunch, we did another photo shoot against the backdrop of a valley filled with cypress trees. Vibrantly graceful. We saw a funeral ceremony. A fragrant atmosphere. The footsteps of the apostles of the prophets. A musk-scented bearer of the holy book. We queue to enter the Rock Mosque (Qubbat al-Sakhrah) with other international tourists. This mosque is a holy place for Muslims, Christians and Jews. We queue to enter a small room under an enormous rock. The rock wanted to follow, or fly with, the Prophet Muhammad when he stopped by here during *Mi'raj*. There is an imprint of the Prophet's foot in one corner which I caress with my prayer mat.

I have a habit of wiping holy places or landmarks with a prayer mat. I bought a lot of prayer mats, as well as turbans, to wipe these places. I wanted to carry the dust wiped back home with my prayer mat and turban. I wet my prayer mat and turban with *zam-zam* water. By wiping dust from the sacred mats, I feel as if I am passing through incomprehensibly ancient times and am always hidden in layers of secrets. Life might be a space that does not really exist, but we think we can feel it. What we think about when we close our eyes is lost when we venture into reality. We constantly have to focus our minds in order to feel.

Within such a narrow space under the rock, in the corner where the Prophet prayed, we prayed two rounds on our rosaries. Next to it was a corner for Christians and another for Jews. We were present in a new period and felt amazed. Astonished. The distance between the Messengers and us was one. A person. An ummah, member of the people of God. The apostles were created with a single task, while we, ordinary people, might or could be anything, and are malleable. This is the non-negotiable advantage of each person. We have travelled so far in the footsteps of the saints, can we really take the dust home? The prayer mat, turban or beads ended up generating further distance which we never knew existed.

Ahim and Nina began to cry from hunger and thirst. The church's resident priest, who had previously appeared briefly, was nowhere to be seen. Mrs Betty calmed them down. There were a number of tourists from the West and their children were also stuck with us. The children began to cry. We regretted not having brought some bread and water. Mrs Betty and Mrs Wiwiek had tears in their eyes. We were tired of watching the televised live broadcast of the battle in the church. Kiai Umar, Mr Toha, Doctor Iqbal, Fajri, Nurrahman, myself, our guide and a few Western tourists peered through the doorway to get a glimpse of the battle between the Palestinian fighters and the Israeli army.

Suddenly a little hooded girl appeared and greeted us, "Salamualaikum." We replied, "Wa'alaikum salam." The girl, *subhanallah*, brought hot tea, bread and honey for us and the Western tourists. Before we had a chance to become acquainted, that little girl, about 12 years old, had already excused herself. We and the Western tourists gobbled up the thin round bread, drizzling it with honey while sipping hot tea, *alhamdulillah*. After five hours of hunger and thirst, when we felt that no help was coming, Allah's blessing appeared unexpectedly. A little girl, like any little girl in Yogya or Solo or Jakarta and Bandung, saved us even though we didn't know west from east.

Kiai Umar, Doctor Iqbal, Mr Toha, and our guide went to the back, looking for the kitchen, where perhaps that little girl was sitting. The kitchen was nowhere to be found, nor was the girl. We then tried to find the priest, but there was no one at the back of the church. Tourists can freely enter and exit the church. It could be said that there was not a single guard to be found. The tourists who came went straight to that little corner where the apostle to Christians was born. I brushed my prayer mat against the birthplace of the Apostle Jesus Christ, which is indicated by a 12-star symbol marked out on a slab and a small cradle where the Apostle of God was laid after his mother was weary from breast-feeding him.

Far more Muslims visit churches than Christians visit mosques. Nature surrounds us. Soothes one's eyes. Here you chase not merely heaven. God hides everything. So that we are not greedy and spoiled. The apostles ask us to be signs.

Jerusalem belongs to the three of us. Let there be no covetousness. When we set foot on the holy land, dust from the apostles' feet are carried by the soles of our feet. Whose dust is this? Whoever owns the dust, it is the dust of the saint who has made us realise that we are only human.

Tangerang, 20 April 2007

Bethlehem Star

PROVENANCE

The Indonesian version, "Bintang Betlehem", is published in:

- *Jawa Pos*, 28 December 2008; and
- *Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon* [From Jerusalem to Armageddon], ed. Danarto dkk. (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2024).

The English version featured in this publication is a translation by Danarto dkk. (Ruhaeni Intan & Grace Samboh).

EDITORS' NOTES

"Bethlehem Star" was written in reference to an event in the New Testament of the Bible where three wise men were guided by a star to travel to Jerusalem. The star then led them to the manger where Jesus was born in Bethlehem. In this short story, a giant unidentified object is seen floating in the Palestinian sky. The object catches the attention of three children and save them from a raging war.

On a limestone hill sparsely covered with date palms, in the city of Jericho, Palestine, three boys suddenly stop their game of chase. The three boys, all aged around 12 years old, marvel at the sky. Something in the sky is so captivating that it would be impossible to ignore. An extraordinarily massive object, seemingly resembling a giant boulder, gold in colour and covered with orange hues, drifting slowly from east to west. A mass of light brighter than the sun.

The giant boulder shines like a dense light reflecting off of the surface of a lake—the light that sometimes melts straight onto the earth—luring those three boys to follow its course. The three boys, whatever their names are, let's call them Aaron, Alan and Ahmed, continuously lift their heads, keeping their eyes on the boulder as if they could hold it in their hands. As they continuously lift their heads to follow the boulder, they repeatedly fall and stumble. The three boys keep getting back on their feet without saying a word and continue to follow the majestic object that drifts slowly ahead of them, wherever it came from and wherever it's going.

A hill of limestone mixed with sand. A quiet hill often swept by gales. A limestone hill, a hill of weeds, date palms, grass, quiet and hot. A hill without a drop of water, without a piece of food, without a roof, sometimes overgrown with banana plantation (is that really a banana plantation kailyard?). Palestinian soldiers are on guard in tents with minimal weapons and are constantly learning how to command others. A time will surely come when the Palestinian armies will be very busy with a government, the Republic of Palestine.

Everything encourages gratitude (the barren land, hot winds, deserted areas, an uncomfortable world). Even the Israeli military, which is faced head-on, can inadvertently provide a way out even though it is dangerous when having breakfast, when meeting in the afternoon, when taking a break at 15.00, sleeping at night (is there a comparable world for the world of Palestine?).

***

The fighting that erupts sporadically between the Israeli military and Palestinian guerrillas in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, as well as in Hebron or Jericho, has predictable results: peace between the two forces is becoming increasingly distant. In fact, when both groups seem eager to negotiate for peace, that's when fighting would commonly erupt.

The Israeli government with Fatah and Hamas on one side, then the Israeli government with Palestinian guerrillas consisting of various factions on the other side, alongside Hamas with Fatah at a divided table, result in crumpled pages of spilled ink, and splashes of black liquid erase points of agreement, a sign of love for the one Motherland.

However, secret enthusiasm to build lasting peace also emerges from most residents of both places. Because they are tired of the conflict that has been going on for decades, and the realisation that Israel and Palestine are of one blood means that it is impossible that they cannot be reconciled, thus they are working hard to bring anyone and everyone to the negotiating table.

Outbreaks of gunshots and bombs always cause all the peace efforts to fall apart. While all the forces are on standby in the foxholes with their most skilled weapons, the three boys suddenly appear and walk across the face of a blushing-red war.

"Shall we just finish off those three kids?" whispers an Israeli soldier to his friend in the foxhole.

"What mission are the three children carrying out?" whispers a Palestinian guerrilla to his friend from behind the rock mound where he was hiding.

"Look up!" he exclaimed, "Is that Israel's latest fighter plane?"

"Is that an experimental Hezbollah bomber?" shouts the Israeli soldier, pointing upwards.

Everyone stares dumbfoundedly at the giant, shining lump. Israeli soldiers, Palestinian guerrillas, the Fatah, Hamas and Hezbollah guerrillas, and all guerrilla groups fighting against the Israeli government. What is that thing? Where did it come from? Where is it heading? Who made it?

Suddenly five state-of-the-art Israeli jets swoop in, spewing rocket shells at the sparkling boulder, but all their shots hit nothing but empty air. How could you shoot at light?

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In fact, the rocket shells are chasing back the fighter planes that spew them like a boomerang. With great difficulty, the five jets, accompanied by the scolding of its pilots, end up destroying ten of their own rocket shells.

In their respective hiding places, Israeli soldiers and Palestinian guerrillas cheer at the event.

"Stupid jets!" shout the Israeli soldiers, making fun of their friends.

"It must be Tel Aviv's illiterate pilots," shout the Palestinian guerrillas laughing.

Meanwhile the three children are shocked to hear successive explosions in the sky. The three of them continue to pass without caring about their surroundings. Then, shots ring out and the three children fall to the ground. They look at each other, perplexed.

"We got shot," said Aaron.

"Who shot us?" Alan asked.

"A ghost," said Ahmed.

So the three of them run, continuing their pursuit of the giant boulder so they don't lose it, all the while ducking to avoid the possibility of being hit by successive bullets.

"Those three kids are really naughty!" shouts an Israeli soldier while firing shots through a rifle scope.

However, none of the three children collapses, even though not a single target could escape the rifle scope. The Israeli soldier is curious. He fires another shot and the three children keep running. The Israeli soldiers are stunned.

"Miraculous children!" shouts the Israeli soldier.

"Don't disturb the three children," says a Palestinian guerrilla to his friend in their hiding cave.

"Why?" asks another.

"Anyway, don't bother."

"I want to hear why."

The president of Israel, the president of Palestine, the president of Egypt, the president of Syria, the president of Lebanon and the president of Jordan ask each other about the celestial object. American fighter jets from Dwight Eisenhower's destroyer fleets, which are anchored in the Red Sea, carry out manoeuvres as close as possible to the giant jutting boulder. The Pentagon questions the Mossad.

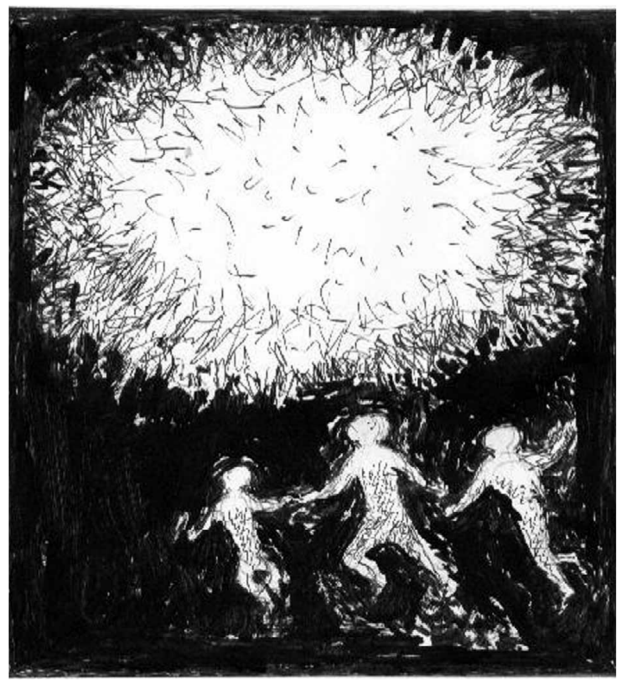
Meanwhile, the unidentifiable celestial object continues to drift westward. The three children keep on collecting light rays that melt from that object.

***

From the palms of those three children's hands, glow thousands upon thousands of rays of light, which they then blow into the open air. The light floats up and down together with the wind that carries them away. They mix with the clouds, disappear and reappear, and cover edges of clouds with colours in the same way as the three children would doodle on the border wall built by the Israeli government to separate the land of Israel from the Palestine area.

All flights arriving to and departing from Ben Gurion Airport, Israel are cancelled. The airport will reopen once the celestial object can be identified. The celestial object finally crosses over the Mediterranean Sea and the 12 American and Israeli fighter jets lose track of it. American and Israeli special forces who were chasing the three children are unable to find them. Who knows where those children have wandered to? Their return is eagerly awaited by their families.

Tangerang, 28 October 2008



a camel went through
the eye of a needle

PROVENANCE

The Indonesian version, "Unta masuk lubang jarum", is published in:

- *Jawa Pos*, 8 March 2009; and
- *Dari Yerusalem ke Armageddon* [From Jerusalem to Armageddon], ed. Danarto dkk. (Jakarta: Gang Kabel, 2024).

The English version featured in this publication is a translation by Danarto dkk. (Ruhaeni Intan & Grace Samboh).

EDITORS' NOTES

This is another short story by Danarto written in journalistic style. The story references numbers and dates like a news report. When this short story was written, a heartbreaking incident occurred where the Israeli army bombarded the Gaza Strip for three weeks from 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009. More than 1,400 Palestinians died in this brutal action.

"A camel going through the eye of a needle" is a metaphor that appears in the Talmud, the Bible and also the Koran. In the Bible, this metaphor is mentioned in Luke 18:25: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Meanwhile, in the Koran, there is a verse that says, "Indeed, those who deny Our signs and are proud of them, the doors of Paradise will not be opened for them, and they will not enter Paradise until a camel goes through the eye of a needle. And thus We reward those who commit evil."

Three Israeli soldiers were shocked to see a Palestinian woman standing still and holding her crying baby. The three Israeli soldiers were amazed to see a Palestinian woman standing still while holding her crying baby. The three Israeli soldiers were bewildered to see a Palestinian woman standing still while holding her crying baby. All three of them scrutinised the woman as they moved around her. One of them removed the woman's veil, revealing a gaunt face with closed eyes. Another one came closer to stare at the uncovered face. Those two soldiers then looked at each other.

The three soldiers watched as blood poured out from gaping holes in the woman's body. The woman's entire body was filled with holes that oozed blood. Even on her head, which was covered by a veil, fresh blood flowed down the curves of her veil. But why did the woman's body not collapse? Why was her baby still crying, which meant not a single bullet had penetrated her body? The three Israeli soldiers were stupefied. All three of them looked at each other. Not a word was spoken. Their eyes seemed to stare into empty air.

Thousands of Israeli soldiers stormed into Gaza's residential neighbourhoods on a dark Friday, on 8 December 2008. The air was filled with smoke and dust as Israeli air force bombardments thundered. Hamas forces answered the cannon blasts of Israeli tanks that reinforced the ground invasion. There were shouts, screams, commands, calls and signals. High and low voices, shrill, crisscrossed and overlapped each other, piercing the devastated area that was filled with pieces of wall piled up and scattered.

The three Israeli soldiers were quickly brought to their feet by the sound of ricocheting bullets. Covering their faces with their weapons, they looked back at the body of the woman who was still standing, holding her crying baby, standing right in front of them.

"A camel went through the eye of a needle," said one of the three Israeli soldiers as he stared at the woman who was holding her crying baby.

"What did you say?" his friend replied.

"Invariably, out of thousands of Palestinians, one passes," the soldier continued.

"I don't know what you're talking about, you better keep your mouth shut," snapped another.

[202.145.6.3] Project MUSE (2026-02-20 10:41 GMT)

ILUSTRASI: DANARTO

"We managed to ransack Gaza, but it feels like we're going home empty-handed."

"What now? Empty-handed?" said the third soldier. "Do you think we should've brought souvenirs?"

"We are facing a solid fortress."

"Solid fortress? Stop joking, already..."

"A woman holding her baby..."

"We can knock her down now!" snarled the third soldier as he rained bullets on the woman's upright body.

Fresh blood poured from the woman's body as her baby cried even louder. The three soldiers were even more amazed by the woman's strength as she was swallowed up in the smoke and dust by the thumping sounds of chunks of wall crumbling into the newly destroyed neighbourhood next door.

A moment of emptiness. An instant of demons passing by. An instant of silent swallowing.

"Let's wait however long it takes to watch her fall."

"Have you never heard the story of the fall of Palestine?"

"So that woman will never collapse?"

"The scripture can be torn apart but it is still scripture."

The three Israeli soldiers were instantly silent, a flurry of gunfire whizzing over their heads. The wind whipped up, sweeping away emotion and guilt. All three of them buried their bodies in the recesses of the rubble from the chunks of the wall. Everything was scattered. Everything was crunching. Too broken, too melted. The three of them then hunkered down, trying to condense their bodies as small as reptiles. Perhaps it was safe to huddle in the recesses. The trio looked back at the woman standing with her crying baby.

"I want to write a song about Palestine."

"Can you write a song?"

"I can't."

"Then you might want to write a poem."

"Have you ever written a poem?"

"No, not yet."

"My brother is good at writing poems."

"Where is your brother?"

"In Tel Aviv."

The three of them opened food cans from backpacks slung over their shoulders. One of them opened a can of vegetables. One of them ate fruits from another can. One of them remained quiet. In the meantime, the baby was still crying out loud.

"Why aren't you eating?"

"I am not hungry."

"You look sad."

"There are always a lot of strange things in war."

"Should I shut the baby up?"

"You can try."

"Should I shove the baby's mouth onto her mother's nipple?"

"You can try."

"I heard that a dead woman still produces milk."

A sudden silence. Asking for a tinkle. Who pressed the piano? There was a ceasefire for three hours. During that time, Israel and Hamas stopped firing. The people of Gaza rushed to the food shops. They bought everything quickly. The three-hour ceasefire was very stingy. Bread, milk, cakes, milk, tinned food, sausages, instant noodles, fruit, emergency lights, candles, matches and mineral water. There was not much to buy. Food supplies in the shops were getting thin. People were also looking for firewood for cooking, as gas and electricity were no longer available.

Children didn't want to eat. They were silent. Their souls were deeply shaken. Their hearts were cut to pieces. With widened eyes, their tears flowed unstoppably, flowing on their own, with their mouths shut. Their eyes were empty. This is not a nightmare. Their mothers couldn't tell them that it was a nightmare, not real. All of these horrible events are really happening. Children cannot be lulled anymore because their souls have been wounded, severely injured, watching their friends lying in blood. The casualties in Gaza have reached 1,500, among them 500 children, and 5,500 wounded, when the unilateral ceasefire was declared by Israel on 18 January 2009. The fighting had lasted more than 20 days, 2 days before Barack Obama was inaugurated as the president of the United States of America.

Residential neighbourhoods, the UN headquarters and hospitals were destroyed by bombs from Israeli warplanes. They alleged that Hamas had tunnels underneath the hospital buildings for weapon smuggling. In this unequal battle, Israel's secret experimentation of phosphorus bombs scorching skins was revealed. Casualties poured in. The international community was outraged and ready to bring Israel to justice as a war criminal.

Chunks of broken walls filled the ground around the woman who was holding her baby and confirmed her as a witness to the history of the war between Palestine and Israel. The woman who never collapsed. Her baby did not stay muted. The baby continued to cry, spreading her tears throughout the Middle East. The three Israeli soldiers became fed up. All three of them kept staring at the woman who was not disturbed at all.

"I guess when we die in this battle, that woman will fall," one of the three friends said. His two fellow soldiers just stared at their silent victims.

"I don't want to die. I want to move to the USA. I don't have anything to defend here," piped up his friend, who had been silent.

"Good luck, buddy."

"Hope you are happy in the USA."

"Thank you."

"Take this Palestinian monument to the USA," said the quiet soldier while pointing at the woman in front of him.

Then there was only silence. Ghosts absorbed.

"In a war, there are lots of incidents that aren't actual incidents."

"What do you mean?"

"Fake incidents."

But the woman remained upright with blood dripping from all over her body, holding her baby who continued crying.

South Tangerang, 20 January 2009

2024?! INSHAALLAH

by Danarto dkk. (Akmalia Rizqita “Chita”, Andri Setiawan,
Anissa Rahadiningtyas, Grace Samboh, Ruhaeni Intan)
translated by Rani Elsanti

In this book, Danarto's drawings illuminate a number of things. They are a window for us to observe Danarto's realm. However, the texts, manuscripts, or pieces of writing that we would immediately recognise as short stories are not necessarily aligned with the drawings. Danarto's drawings are an invitation, if not an enticement, for our sight to be liberated, to take part in constructing stories with him. Danarto's drawings contained in this book encompass his different styles. In *Armageddon*, we can see Danarto's *wayang* style as popularised by *Zaman* magazine–slender, lithe bodies drawn in continuous fine lines. We encountered two different drawings from the two previous *Armageddon* publications, and we chose to present them both. The two drawings show the same scene: the dumbstruck mother looking at her nude, dancing daughter, pursued by the fearsome Bekakrak-an creature floating in the moonlight. The most obvious difference between the two drawings are the horizontally flipped orientations and the ratio—one of them is present in a seemingly elongated plane, providing it with ample breathing space. No one drawing is better than the other.

In (1978) there are drawings and scribblings that we might also consider as drawings, and words, letters, punctuations and spaces, arranged in such a way to appear as drawings. One of the drawings shows a machine, a combination of a typewriter and a telescope, with a pair of "tentacles" (or antennae) on top. It is a drawing of an SMPVTU machine, or an "analyser", which the story describes as a sophisticated computer with the capacity to process a myriad of data, starting from sounds, pictures and events and presenting the latest news, just like what our computers do today (see page 36). The text of "Klui klui klui klui" on top reflects the sounds the machine makes when it does its search. Nowadays, writing someone's name on a device to find out what they are doing or where they are is not uncommon. We do it on Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp, or Google. But remember, this short story was written in 1978. The machine seems to be a prophecy of sorts that Danarto made about the advanced future he envisioned.

In *Sheets of Light*, we encounter a coloured picture, a portrait of a woman and six tableaux. The tableaux are rectangular, and in the corners there are small circles with red diametrical lines, making the tableaux look like pamphlets pinned to the wall. If we read the tableaux along with the text, each of the tableaux actually depicts a scene in line with the story. Plumes of smoke, a blazing fire, soldiers threatening young girls. The lines and shading lines seem to have been drawn quickly but deftly, coming from a realm that is not unlike that of the drawing of *A Camel Went Through the Eye of A Needle* as we discussed before. In *The Tunnel*, we are again presented with a portrait of a little girl, but this one in colours, which is rare in Danarto's oeuvre. The colour palette used here is a mix of magenta, indigo, violet and different shades of green—more or less similar to the coloured drawing of *Sheets of Light*, which was used for the cover of *Horison* magazine, July 1988 edition. In our observation, the style shown in the pictures is Danarto's way to bring out the realities of war that we are still seeing to this day.

Danarto said that short stories are like wild flowers, singled out by the picker while the audience observes. Although they might enlighten us, short stories are not the most noble source of wisdom. Danarto said, "Short stories are more like water spouts. They're pipes. Yes, it's true, everything goes through them. Lies, falsehood, anger, envy, the author's jealousy of truth, perhaps." The elusive nature of truth, he said, forces the writer to lie.[1] Strangely though, no matter how impossible it might be for a mother to stand tall in an area where it is raining bullets and bombs, with her baby in her arms, this is still the reality we are still witnessing

1. See Danarto, "PROSES, PROSES, PROSES, PROSES, PROSES, PROSES", a paper for *Temu Sastra* literary conference at Taman Ismail Marzuki (Jakarta) in 1982 https://archive.org/details/19821206-makalah-proses-proses-proses

today. A strong fort, Palestine will hold; such is Danarto's truth presented in the fragments of conversations among the three Israeli soldiers in *A Camel Went Through the Eye of A Needle*. Even the Israeli soldiers admit this.[2] In this short story collection, Danarto's truths appear clearly, lucidly, palpably and candidly. It might be appropriate to call such less-than-profound wisdom as Danarto's prophecy.

A number of Danarto's short stories presented in this book have been published before, along with Danarto's drawings. In general, drawings that come alongside short stories are often considered as "illustration" or "short story illustration". With such a designation, the drawings inevitably take an almost literal position: It has the duty to depict the story. In a number of Danarto's short stories published alongside his drawings, we need to investigate further about the relationship between the drawings and the text. Are they illustrations? Or are they drawings-in-text?[3] Or perhaps the short stories are in fact notes to the drawings?[4] In Danarto's works, do we need to separate the two elements, the drawings and the text, and read them as two different things, two different texts in the Derridean logic? If so, which one goes first? Is it the drawings? Or the text? Will the first one immediately be the most important? Why?

In one of the drawings in the book, Danarto presented a woman standing tall. The lady is holding a baby, with curved lines for eyes and lips. Covered in a veil with a long fabric wrapped around her body, the lady looks serene, without any significant overflow of emotions. She has a dreamy look, ignoring the three startled soldiers before her. The three soldiers are in full uniform, wearing boots and helmets and carrying guns. Their uniforms, their normal suits, immediately suffuse us with ideas of terror, violence and wars. All the horror, however, dissipates as the soldiers are depicted like powerless babies, scared and shrivelling before the lady. Around them are debris, ruins of walls in disarray. Vaguely in the background is billowing smoke from the collapsed buildings of the city. There are two or three that are still recognisable, the rest are just the remains.

The short story *A Camel Went Through the Eye of A Needle* tells of the attack of Israeli soldiers on the settlement in Gaza. The city is collapsing. There is smoke and dust everywhere. In the middle of the war, a Palestinian mother holds a crying baby. She is serene in the midst of the destroyed city. Her body is full of bullet holes, covered in blood. Her baby, however, is not wounded at all. The three Israeli soldiers, who, on doing the rounds and going to investigate her, uncover her veil, looking for answers as to why she is still standing. They immediately lie down as bullets are whizzing by again. They are nervous, wondering, asking, how is this possible?

> *"A camel went through the eye of a needle," said one of the three Israeli soldiers, gazing at the woman who is standing still, carrying her crying baby.*

The imagery of the "camel goes through the needle's eye" also appears in the Talmud's Berakhot, the Bible, and the Koran.[5] In the

2. Fragments of the discussion among the tree soldiers in the story of "A Camel Went Through the Eye of A Needle."
3. Drawing-in-text. See Sudjoko, 2001. "Senarai", supplement to the book *Pengantar Seni Rupa* [Introduction to Art]. Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, Departemen Pendidikan Nasional.
4. Notes to the illustrations. See Sudjoko, ibid.
5. See Talmud Berakhot 55b:21 on https://www.sefaria.org/Berakhot.55b.21?lang=bi; also, see the Gospel of Marc 10:25 https://alkitab.sabda.org/passage.php?passage=Mrk%2010:25-37&tab=text; the Gospel of Luke18:25 https://alkitab.sabda.org/passage.php?passage=Luk%2018:18-25&tab=text; and Luke18:25 https://alkitab.sabda.org/passage.php?passage=Luk%2018:18-25&tab=text; and in Koran's Al-Araf 40 https://quran.com/id/tempat-tempat-tinggi/40

Berakhot, however, the animal in the imagery is an elephant, but in essence it conveys an impossibility, something that cannot happen. We are fortunate because nothing is impossible for Danarto—in terms of thoughts, drawings, as well as writing. A mother who turns into a rock, a mother and her daughter murdering each other for a man's love, a sweet little girl swallowing sheets of light, and, the one that we just described, a mother and her bullet-proof baby. How do we know all this? Is it from the drawing? Is it from the short story? Is it both?

We believe that a work of research is inevitably a work of development. The development of different possibilities in reading, the possibilities of connections of thoughts and practices across the eras, and translations, not only in a one-directional or literal sense, but also a type of transliteration—we say "a type of", because we don't only mean the transfer of scripts, but also how certain words, sentences and stories are perceived today. Having said that, transliteration in its strict literal meaning is sometimes necessary when we talk about Danarto's artistic practices. In a number of short story titles that take the form of drawings or involving drawings and not only words, or in parts of the short stories in which the letters or words are arranged in such a way to make sure that the experience of reading not only involves deriving meanings from how the words are arranged in sentences. A case in point is his screenplay for a children's theatre, *Bumi di tangan anak-anak* [Earth within children's hands], 2004, which he developed fully in the form of a pictorial series.

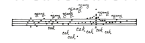
There are notes that support our hunch that Danarto often started his creative process with drawings, regardless of what the final forms would take. In his journal, Danarto wrote that he finished the drawings that would accompany the story *Sheets of Light* two months before the story was finished.[6] In the introduction to his only novel, *Asmaraloka* (1999), Danarto described how he applied the habit he had acquired from his visual art work, which was doodling on paper, as if he was sketching the story before he eventually wrote it. One of the editors of the newspaper that published *Asmaraloka* in installments recounted how Danarto would come to the newspaper's office, make his drawings, take a nap, and then write the installment nearing the deadline just before the paper was going to be sent to the printer.[7]

Tracing Danarto's works is a journey in which our sensitivity about the different varieties of texts is continually developed and enhanced—whether the text is present in the form of drawings, doodlings, letters, punctuations, words or sentences. As we consider the vast variety of Danarto's practices and his flexible attitude, we are gradually deconstructing our own thoughts about the boundaries that perhaps have never existed. As far as we know, Danarto himself did not separate his drawing practices from those of painting, apart from the fact that they used different sets of tools. As we have seen in *Armageddon*, Danarto did not hesitate to draw the same scenes, use the same visuals repeatedly, re-make his drawings and present the same characters in different settings. The character Bekakrak-an, for example, once appeared in an oil painting titled *Si Hitam dan Si Putih* [The Black and the white], 1963, in a totally different form.

As we know, the short story *Armageddon* has a spatial and temporal tag (Bandung, 24 June 1968). It is absolutely not crazy to consider the character Bekakrak-an to have been born from the oil painting, as a form of further development from the character of a dismal creature consisting of bare bodily

6. He worked on the drawings for three days, 12–15 May 1988. Source: Danarto's personal journal.
7. Seno Joko Suyono, Moyang Kasih merdeka, Prihandoko, Nurdin Kalim, Ahmad Rafiq, Shinta Maharani, Pito Agustin Rudiana, "Sayap-sayap keindahan Danarto" [Danarto's Wings of Beauty], *Tempo*, 22 April 2018

organs, unprotected by enveloping flesh. Danarto reproduced the character in the painting, introducing it to his short story. We can clearly see how Bekakrak-an's character had been gradually developed, from the *Si Hitam dan Si Putih* oil painting to the two drawings in *Armageddon*. Danarto reproduced and developed his characters, ideas and thoughts, and at the same time made the transliteration himself. As such, Danarto's movements, behaviours and values in his artistic practices have guided us as a group of researchers and art and cultural workers who have been investigating his life and art practices.

In September 2022 at Barın Han, an artisan bookbindery studio in Istanbul that has also been embarking on the work of book conservation, Nayamullah Station hosted a translation assembly. We invited Indonesian students to collaboratively translate  into Turkish. Obviously we do not speak Turkish, so what we mean by "collaboration" is mainly that of the five members of Indonesian Students Association in Istanbul who have been conversing in Turkish since high school. We sat down together and told them about Danarto's artistic practices, his friends, his life and the era in which he lived, to ensure they understand the context. We had such a lively discussion, so much so that together we decided to translate another short story, *ABRACADABRA* (1974). Apart from the five translators, there was also one Turkish editor, three Turkish-speaking friends, and a group of researchers who had been involved in the translation assembly at Barin Han.

The book you're holding has further involved even more people as it was being published in three languages—in Indonesian by Gang Kabel publishing house, in English by the *Southeast of Now* journal from NUS Press; and in Arabic by Radio Alhara. At the beginning of the book, we explained the sense of solidarity and the act of taking a stand, but there is also the conviction that Danarto's authorship, which goes hand-in-hand with his drawing works, deserves a close investigation. Jakob Sumardjo considered Danarto a literary innovator. As befits a literary innovator, Danarto created a style that would then give rise to other Danartos, or a style that Jakob Sumardjo called "Danartois", taking a cue from authors of Franz Kafka's calibre, who created the distinct Kafkaesque characteristics.

> *What makes Danarto's short stories surrealistic, "trance-like", akin to nightmares and fairy tales, is his idea in perceiving the universe as something pantheistic, hoping for the union with The Absolute. One day, someone else might write this kind of story. And, as with Kafka, people might call the style Danartois.*[8]

When he wrote this, Jakob Sumardjo might not have imagined that Danarto, with his genius—in writing, drawing, painting, directing, costume-making and stage designing—would fall between the cracks, swept away by the onslaught of the era as time progresses (or slides backward). People might forget that we once had Danarto, who started the Danarto-esque style. One effort to keep this in our memories is by re-reading his short stories, looking at his drawings again, tracing back Danarto's vast artistic practices, and revisiting Danarto's works in their novel (and old) forms. This effort will never succeed without the access to all the works that Danarto had made with his own two hands.

Instead of becoming Danartois, we—the researchers in Danarto dkk.—tend to make conjectures, map out, trace, read and share Danarto's works in different forms and possibilities. One of them is Nayamullah—which started with the alliance between Julian Abraham "Togar" and Saleh Husein, both members of Danarto

8. See "Godlob: The Longing for God", published in *Suara Karya* newspaper https://archive.org/details/19790130-suara-karya-godlob-kerinduan-pada-tuhan/mode/2up

dkk., whose artistic practices encompass visuals, sound and music. In an online meeting, *Ngaji Bunyi #3* [Sound Devotions #3] with Nayamullah, they examined Danarto's landscape of sounds. Saleh Husein played the selection of music from his vinyl collection that showed musical influences of the Middle Eastern soundscape, i.e. Alwi Hasan's *Orkes Melayu Pengabdian* [Pengabdian Malay Orchestra], Abdul Kadir's *Orkes Sinar Kemala* [Sinar Kemala Orchestra], *Munif dan Orkesnja* [Munif and His Orchestra], and Adikarso's *Orkes Kelana Ria* [Kelana Ria Orchestra]. The session invited several music observers, researchers and sound practitioners, such as Adil Alba (founder of a research institution on the identity and culture of the community with Arab ancestries in Indonesia), Muhammad Yaser Arafat (writer, lecturer and researcher on the influences of the Arabian language and culture), and Irfan R. Darajat (writer and researcher from the LARAS music study group). The session inspired the many possibilities for the research works on Danarto's artistic practices.

In exhibition spaces for the visual art, Nayamullah might serve as the reason for making a concert among paintings and sculptures, for jamming sessions, or for workshops exploring the different aspects of sound. On the performance stage, Nayamullah might act as the band that has since the get-go rejected the permanence of their personnel—they can be the DJ or selector, or serve as the background for comic actors. Anyone can be a member of Nayamullah, including those who are generally called the audience. Nayamullah can also serve as a radio without a network—its practical work is to develop programmes, and the programmes would be aired by radio stations owned by colleagues and friends with networks, such as the Açık Radyo (Istanbul), ragadiogogo (OK Studio), norrm (Bandung) and Radio Alhara (Betlehem). Since June 2023, Radio Alhara has been airing the programmes of Nayamullah Station, containing the different archival readings about Danarto's artistic practices as well as the translation of Danarto's short stories.[9]

The availability of access demands reproductions. According to the Indonesian Official Dictionary KBBI, reproduction means proliferation, copies, repeat products. To reproduce means to make reproductions, to produce again, to regenerate. Through Nayamullah, we represent Danarto's ideas in *novel*[10] forms, i.e. in the form of radio dramas. With the work of transliteration, Danarto's writing is regenerated in totally different forms compared to when the short stories were written and the drawings made. In Taman Bacaan Danarto (Danarto Reading Park), we present his original and reproduced works, whether in the forms of writing, drawing, painting, theatrical works, etc; we present them side by side so the works can encounter new and old audiences.

With this, Danarto's works have the chance to belong to the public again. They do not become myths, unlike the events that he recounted in his short stories, or the subjects that he sketched in his drawings and paintings. He becomes familiar to us and this makes it possible to trace the footsteps and influences that might be Danarto's legacy in the literary and art world today. Although Danarto wrote his short stories alone, and even made the drawings himself for a number of these short stories, the translation and publication of the works—as an effort to expand the readership of these works—have been the results of a collaborative work. We would like to offer the work as that of enlightened/emancipated readers. The work of an audience

9. List of programs aired through radioalhara.net: *Concrete, Concrete, Concrete, Concrete, Concrete, Concrete? Poetry?*, 7 June 2023, 16:00-17:00 Jakarta Time; *Asmaraloka: Speaking of drawings...*, 5 July 2023, 16:00-17:00 Jakarta Time; *Oral modular*, 2 August 2023, 19:30-20:30 Jakarta Time; Faktor X, 6 September 2023, 19:30-20:30 Jakarta Time; •LIGHTS•, 4 October 2023, 19:30-20:30 Jakarta Time,
10. 'Novel' here refers to the original form of the works; i.e. short stories.

that takes a stand—not only with the short stories, but also with the drawings.

The act of making copies, reproductions, or re-presentation of the works, which we are now undertaking, could also be found in Danarto's art practices. In some of his exhibitions, he copied his own drawings using a photocopy machine, then he drew new lines over them. He redrew his own works. Bambang Bujono mentioned how Danarto was "reinvigorating" his works, which he reproduced using the photocopier, and Bujono said that Danarto was a "surrealistic" figure because of this act.[11] Danarto once used a drawing of the same female figure for at least three different *wayang* stories in *Zaman* magazine.[12] Returning to the two examples of the drawings for *Armageddon* (which we can see on page 18 & 20), the short story and drawings were first published in *Horison* magazine (June 1969). A similar scene, with the same composition of characters, over a similar landscape as a background, was also published alongside the short story in Danarto's collection of stories published by Penerbit Nusa Indah (Ende, 1977). Our suspicion is that he did not know where he stored the pieces of paper with the drawings that he had submitted to *Horison* magazine. Rather than enduring the headache of trying to find it, he just submitted a new drawing to Nusa Indah Publishing House. Where are Danarto's original drawings? Only God knows...

Danarto's sense of freedom, flexibility, and lightness were also reflected in his behaviour in relation to the space in which he worked. In some of the original drawings, we can see traces of patch-ups using glue or sticky tape to repair damaged parts or deal with a lack of drawing spaces. Danarto seemed to trust that inshallah, God willing, such patch-ups would not be a problem as they would not be revealed when the drawings were scanned or printed for the publications that had requested them. His ideas, dreams, stories, tales, and prophecies were not hampered by the space on the piece of paper, the printing plane, the space or even time. In Danarto's faith in simplicity and also his persistence, we are convinced that "A strong fort, Palestine will hold" is a prophecy for a future that will soon come to be. God willing. Inshaallah.

11. Bambang Bujono, "Garis seni tiga kawakan" [Lines by Three Masters], *Kompas*, 3 November 2000.
12. We obtained the scanned original drawings from Seno Gumira Ajidarma and Hikmat Darmawan. What we have gathered so far is that they had been published in *Zaman* magazine, 8 June 1985 and 15 June 1985 editions.

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02 . . . . . Temptation Restaurant, Jericho. Photo by Danarto, 1995. Collection of Danarto's estate, Hyphen—, and Danarto dkk.

03 . . . . . Danarto, drawing in "Masjidil Aqsha, Yahudi, dan Umar Khatab" [The Aqsa Mosque, Jews, and Umar ibn al-Khattab], circa 1999. Scanned from Danarto, *Orang Jawa naik haji dan umroh* [Javanese on Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage] (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1999), p. 159. Collection of Hyphen— and Danarto dkk.

04 . . . . . Danarto, drawing in "Masjidil Aqsha, Yahudi, dan Umar Khatab" [The Aqsa Mosque, Jews, and Umar ibn al-Khattab], circa 1999. Scanned from Danarto, *Orang Jawa naik haji dan umroh* [Javanese on Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage] (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1999), p. 162. Collection of Hyphen— and Danarto dkk.

05 . . . . . Dome of Ascencion, Jerusalem. Photo by Danarto, 1995. Collection of Danarto's estate, Hyphen—, and Danarto dkk.

10 . . . . . (Both images) Amin al-Husaini & Prof. K.H. Abdul Kahar Muzakkir in Masjid Gedhe, Yogyakarta, 29 April 1955. Arsip Kempen DIY Tahun 1950–1956 [Archive of Yogyakarta Special Region's Ministry of Communication, Year 1950–1956], No. 4413 & No. 4412. Source: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia [National Archives of Indonesia].

18 . . . . . Danarto, "Armageddon" short story (1968). Scanned from *Horison*, June 1969, p. 178. Collection of Hyphen— and Danarto dkk.

20 . . . . . Danarto, "Armageddon" short story, circa 1968–75. Scanned from Danarto, *8 cerita pendek* [8 short stories] (Ende: Nusa Indah, 1977), p. 90. Collection of Hyphen— and Danarto dkk.

56 . . . . . Danarto, cover for *Horison* magazine, July 1988. Collection of Hyphen— and Danarto dkk.

58, 60, 62, 63, 66, 67, 68, ... Danarto, "Lempengan-lempengan cahaya" [Sheets of Light] short story (1988). Scanned from *Horison*, July 1988, pp. 230–5. Collection of Hyphen— and Danarto dkk.

76-77 . . . . . Danarto, "Terowongan" [The Tunnel] short story (1996). Scanned from *Matra*, December 1996 special edition, pp. 134–5. Collection of Hyphen— and Danarto dkk.

95 . . . . . Danarto, "Bintang Betlehem" [Bethlehem Star] short story (2008). Scanned from *Jawa Pos*, 28 December 2008. Collection of Jawa Pos, Hyphen— and Danarto dkk.

99 . . . . . Danarto, "Unta masuk lubang jarum" [A Camel Went Through the Eye of A Needle] short story (2009). Scanned from *Jawa Pos*, 8 March 2009. Collection of Jawa Pos, Hyphen—, and Danarto dkk.

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Biographies

Danarto (born in Sragen, Central Java, 1940; died in Jakarta, 2018) is one of those rare artists who did everything, and did it all well. His body of work includes: performing his poetry and delivering monologues, writing and directing theatre plays, painting and making installations, designing posters, drawing illustrations for children's publications and various periodicals, building sets for films and theatre, writing critical reviews, as well as offering weekly satirical social and political commentary and contributing to an Islamic lifestyle column.

Widely acknowledged as a key figure in the Indonesian literary scene, Danarto has published six collections of short stories,[1] a novel,[2] two collections of travelogues[3] and three collections of writings.[4] His friend Seno Gumira Ajidarma once dubbed Danarto a "great consumer", a nickname that describes his enormous appetite for culture of any origins, shape or size. Danarto also once stated that the most memorable memory from his childhood is bearing witness to war and deaths.[5] What he consumed actually left clues that we can easily trace in his works, therefore it is unsurprising that war violence and deaths are two recurring themes in his short stories, as seen in this publication.

Especially in his writings, one is constantly surprised by how time and space are presented, unfolding very differently from our mundane reality. He acknowledges various realms, worldly and spiritual, the here and the hereafter. In his work and his life, he traversed all these realms with the same ease; everyone and everything are equally worthy of being talked to, cursed at, praised or treated to a feast. And as such, all the things that exist in his short stories, including Palestine, are actually never far off from where he—and we—stand.

1. First prints of the six short stories collection by Danarto are: *Godlob* (Jakarta: Rombongan dari Dirah (1974), 1975); *Adam Ma'rifat* [Adam, the wisdom of God] (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1982); *Berhala* [Sacrilege] (Jakarta: Penerbit Pustaka Firdaus, 1987); *Gergasi* [Gluttonous giant] (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1993); *Setangkai Melati di Sayap Jibril* [A stalk of jasmine on Gabriel's wing] (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Bentang Budaya, 2001); *Kacapiring* [Gardenia] (Jakarta: Banana, 2008) which was later re-published under the title *Ikan-ikan dari laut merah* [Fishes of the red sea] (Yogyakarta: Diva Press, 2016). Known published translated works of Danarto in English include: Danarto, et al. *From Surabaya to Armageddon: Indonesian Short Stories*, ed. and trans. Harry Aveling (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Book (Asia), 1976); Danarto, *Abracadabra*, trans. Harry Aveling (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia), 1978); Danarto and Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Crossing the border: five Indonesian short stories*, ed. and trans. Harry Aveling (Clayton: Monash University, 1986).

2. Danarto's only novel, *Asmaraloka* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1999), was initially published as a serial in the daily newspaper, *Republika*, 23 April–26 June 1993.

3. Danarto's travelogues from his Hajj pilgrimage in 1983 were published as a collection entitled *Orang Jawa naik haji* [Javanese on Hajj pilgrimage] (Jakarta: Grafitipers, 1984) after having been published as a series of article in *Zaman* magazine between 1 October–21 January 1984 under the rubric, "Surat dari tanah suci" [Letters from the Holy Land]. This travelogue was later republished together with logs from his Umrah pilgrimage in 1993 and 1995 in a collection entitled *Orang Jawa naik haji dan umroh*. [Javanese on Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage] (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1999).

4. Danarto's essays for *Republika* daily newspaper's "Refleksi" [Reflection] and "Opini" [Opinion] columns between 1993–96 were published as an anthology entitled *Begitu ya begitu tapi mbok jangan begitu: Esai-esai refleksi keseharian Danarto tentang cinta, kebijaksanaan, dan nilai-nilai kemanusiaan di hadapan Tuhan* [It is what it is but please don't make it like so: a collection of Danarto's reflective essays on everyday practice of love, wisdom, and religion] (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 1996); from the "Hikmah" [Blessings] of the same periodical were published as the anthology, *Gerak-gerik Allah: sejumput hikmah spiritual* [Gestures of God: a small collection of spiritual blessings] (Surabaya: Risalah Gusti, 1996); a collection of reflective essays from Islamic teaching of hadith were published as a series entitled *Cahaya Rasul 1: Hikmah Ramadhan & Haji* [The Apostle's light: blessings of Ramadhan & Hajj], *Cahaya Rasul 2: Hikmah Keseharian* [The Apostle's light: blessings of everyday life], and *Cahaya Rasul 3: Hikmah Kemasyarakatan* [The Apostle's light: blessings of being part of the society] (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1999).

5. In an interview by two middle school Madrasa students published in *Republika*, 18 January 1997, "Melukis sebelum Taman Kanak-kanak" [Painting since before kindergarten], Danarto answered a question on his most memorable memory from his childhood with the quote, "When I was a child, I was living in the midst of war. At the time, it was common to see people being tortured or being shot to death." In another instance, Arwan Tuti Artha through his reportage published in *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 18 October 1984, "Seniman Danarto: tertawalah terus genangan darah menghantui hidupnya" [Danarto the artist: laughing away as pools of blood haunts his life] described that Danarto's childhood explains the bloodshed in his short stories with the quote, "When Danarto was 9 years old, Sragen was occupied by the Dutch. Danarto, along with his five siblings and his parents, were captured by the Dutch when they were trying to evacuate the town. As a result, they were held as captives in the Dutch encampment overnight. There, Danarto saw pools of blood flowing from the guerillas' detention room."

Danarto dkk. (initiated 2020) is a research group that aims to unfold the different trajectories of the life and work of Danarto. In Indonesia's national language, *dkk.* is an abbreviation that means '... and friends'. Danarto dkk. believes that archival work will only find its significance through encounters with—and use by, therefore easily accessible for—a wider public. Some of the activities through which Danarto dkk. have attempted to bring archives to the public includes: presentation/discussion events, archive exhibitions, music concerts, radio broadcasts, workshops and panel discussions with experts. Initiated and sustained by a group of cross-disciplinary practitioners and academicians, Danarto dkk is open to anyone who is interested in joining the current group of people involved:

Akmalia Rizqita "Chita"
Researcher, comic artist, part of Hyphen—

Andri Setiawan
Writer, researcher, part of Hyphen—

Anissa Rahadiningtyas
Art historian, curator of modern and contemporary Islamic aesthetics in Southeast Asia at the National Gallery Singapore

Arie Syarifuddin a.k.a. Alghorie
Cross-disciplinary artist and designer, part of Jatiwangi Art Factory

Enin Supriyanto
Art worker, writer, cook, musician, founder of RUBANAH Underground Hub

Grace Samboh
Writer, researcher, part of Hyphen—, programme director for RUBANAH Underground Hub

HS Hairus Salim
Writer, research consultant, executive director of Yayasan LKIS (Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial), manager of Gading Publisher and Lumbung Informasi Kebudayaan (LIKE) Indonesia

Julian Abraham "Togar"
Artist, musician

Rachel K. Surijata
Art worker, researcher, part of *Hyphen—*

Ratna Mufida
Art worker, researcher, part of *Hyphen—*

Ruhaeni Intan
Writer, researcher, part of *Hyphen—*

Sakdiyah Ma'ruf
Stand-up comedian, awardee of Vaclav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent (2015), BBC's 100 Women (2018) and BBC Cultural Frontline's 12 Artists that Changed the World (2019)

Saleh Husein
Artist, musician, guitarist for the bands White Shoes & The Couple's Company and The Adams

Setyaji Asfani
Musician, art worker

Harry Aveling is a Professor in the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics at Monash University. He specialises in Indonesian and Malay Literature, and Translation Studies. Harry has published widely in translation theory and has translated extensively from Indonesian and Malay, from Vietnamese Francophone writing, and co-translated from Hindi. Harry was one of the first to recognise Danarto's talent, placing him in his anthology *From Surabaya to Armageddon* (1976, Heinemann Educational Books Asia) alongside Idrus, Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Sitor Situmorang. He subsequently translated Danarto's first anthology *Abracadabra* (1978, Heinemann Educational Books Asia).

Rani Elsanti's stint as a writer for a student magazine during her university years started her love affair with languages, eventually diverting her away from engineering towards a linguistic career. Having considerable experience as a translator and editor, she now mostly works as an interpreter specialising in health and animal health. If she's not spending her time assisting researchers in chicken houses or cattle pens, she is usually working alongside scientists at the laboratory or in seminars. A mother of six young children—five of them furry and four-legged—she leads a chaotic life outside her working hours, but every now and then she manages to set aside some time to work with the written word to maintain her interest in art and history.